

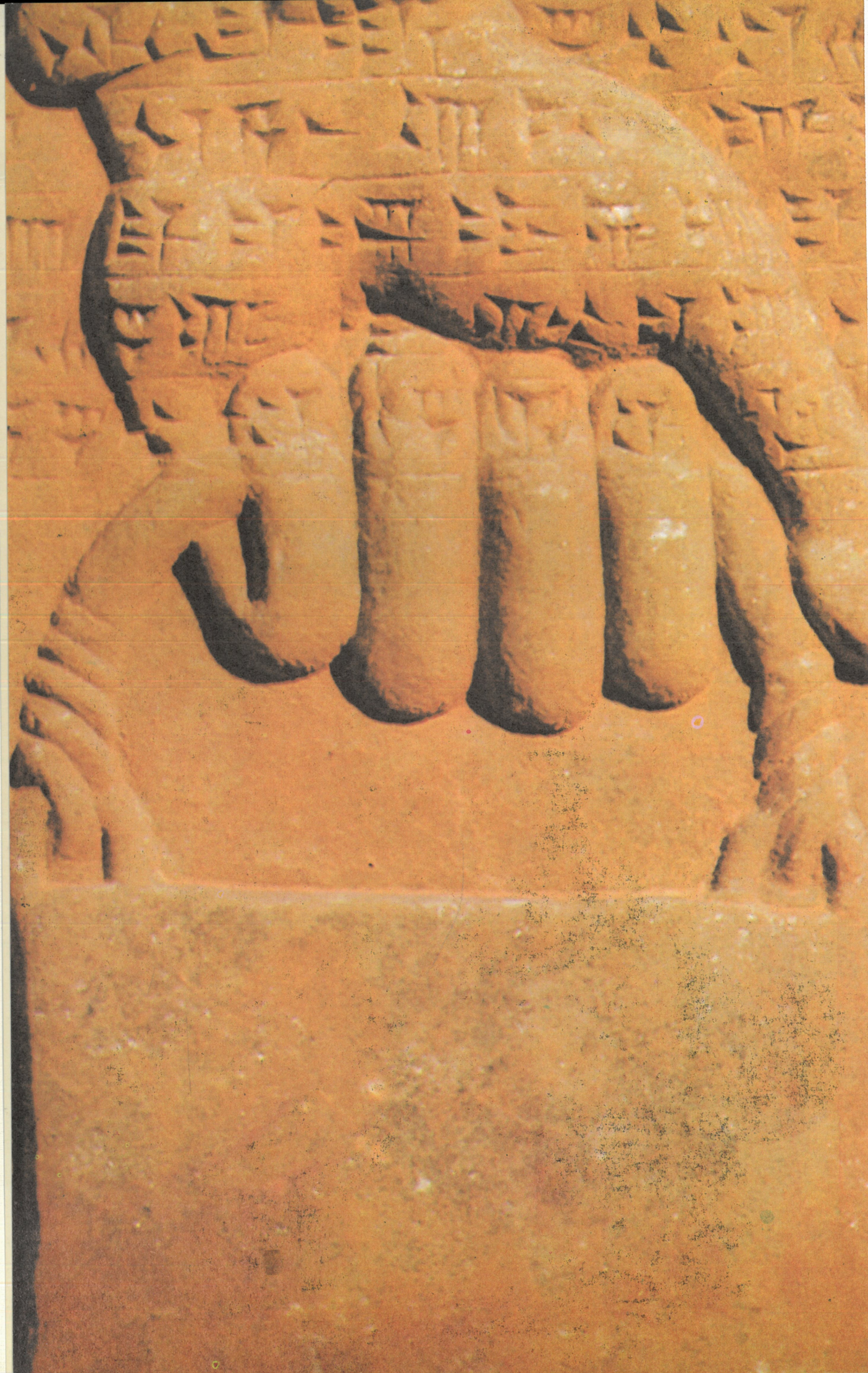


GILGAMESH

A Journal of Modern Iraqi Arts

2_1987





The Beginnings

Naji Al-Hadithi

Towards the end of the eighteenth century and the early years of this one, enlightened Iraqis started to think and to take some concrete steps in several cultural fields after a long period of darkness and backwardness which had prevailed for about eight centuries since the fall of Iraq to foreign domination in 1258. Those years witnessed the emergence of fiction writing. Pioneer dramatists, novelists and short story writers started a budding movement which was later to expand and get higher levels of maturity within the middle and later decades of this century.

This issue, among other things, carries two articles on the early stages of fiction writing in general and the early steps of establishing an Iraqi theatre. It also shows the development of another field of Iraqi arts movement, ceramics. Iraqi artists, inspired by a great heritage of pottery industry in the pre-historical and Islamic civilisations, established a most rich contribution to the arts movement. An article on the beginnings of this colourful art is included in this issue.

Published by Dar al-Ma'mun for Translation and Publishing
Ministry of Information and Culture, Karradat Mariam, Baghdad - Iraq.
P.O. Box 24015, Tel.: 5383171, Telex: 212984 MAMUN IK.

Front cover : Nuha Al-Radhi, Ceramic
Back cover : Al-Wasiti, Maqamat Al-Hariri
Inside front cover: Detail from Nimrud
Inside back cover: Tapestry from Iraq

Poetry and short story drawings by Mohammed Muhreddin

Contents

- 3 The Beginnings
- 7 Khalid Al-Rahhal 1926-1986
- 11 Modern Iraqi Ceramics
- 19 A Sunny Dream (Poem)
- 20 A Burning (Poem)

Naji Al-Hadithi
Farouq Yousif
Nouri Al-Rawi

Ali Al-Hilli

- 21 Story of The Guest (Poem)
- 23 The Wooden Bird (Poem)
- 25 The Pelican (Poem)
- 26 The Nay, Silence and Monotony (Poem)
- 27 The Helmet and the Sea Gull (Poem)
- 28 Secret Rooms (Short Story)
- 37 The Half-Visibles (Short Story)

Hasab Al-Shaikh Ja'far

Mohammed Jameel Shalash

Abdul Sattar Nasir
May Mudhaffar

- 41 Dramatic Structure in Modern Poetry
- 46 The Emergence and Development of Iraqi Story
- 55 Iraqi Theatre 1880-1920
- 61 The City as a Contemporary Labyrinth
- 68 The Influence of Folklore on Modern Iraqi Literature
- 72 The Relationship Between Contemporary Poetry and Arab Heritage
- 75 Al-Sayyab and Christ
- 79 Musical Composition in Iraq

Ali Ja'far Al-Allaq
Abdul Illah Ahmed
Ahmed F. Al-Mafraji
Sabry Hafez
Kadhim Sa'deddin
Kadhim S. Al-A'yidi
Shihab Ahmed
As'ad Mohammed Ali

Currents

- 83 Folklore Festival
- 84 Mosul Spring Festival
- 86 Exhibitions
- 89 Theatre
- 92 Film Production
- 93 Intellectual Symposiums
- 95 Seminars

A Journal of Modern Iraqi Arts

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11

The art movement in Iraq is part of the worldwide art movement. Though the Iraqi experiment in modern methods has only recently started, Iraqi ceramists are resolved that tradition should be respected in order to produce splendid ceramics.



41

If experience is the real source of inspiration for poets, a great deal of Iraqi poetry at present can be described as a true expression of poet's actual experience. This is true especially of the poetry devoted to the war and based on the poet's experience in connection to the Iraq-Iran war.



55

Modern theatre movement is believed to have started in Iraq in the early 1920s. There are, however, some indications that the first play ever performed in Baghdad was in 1909. Ironically the play, Jeane D'Arc was not presented in Arabic but rather in French and there is no reference as to whom its author, director and actors and actresses were.



84

Among the colourful events that take place every year in Iraq with the advent of spring is the Mosul Spring Festival.

The festival which starts on the 7th of April each year includes many arts exhibitions, flower shows, musicals, plays, race meetings and others.



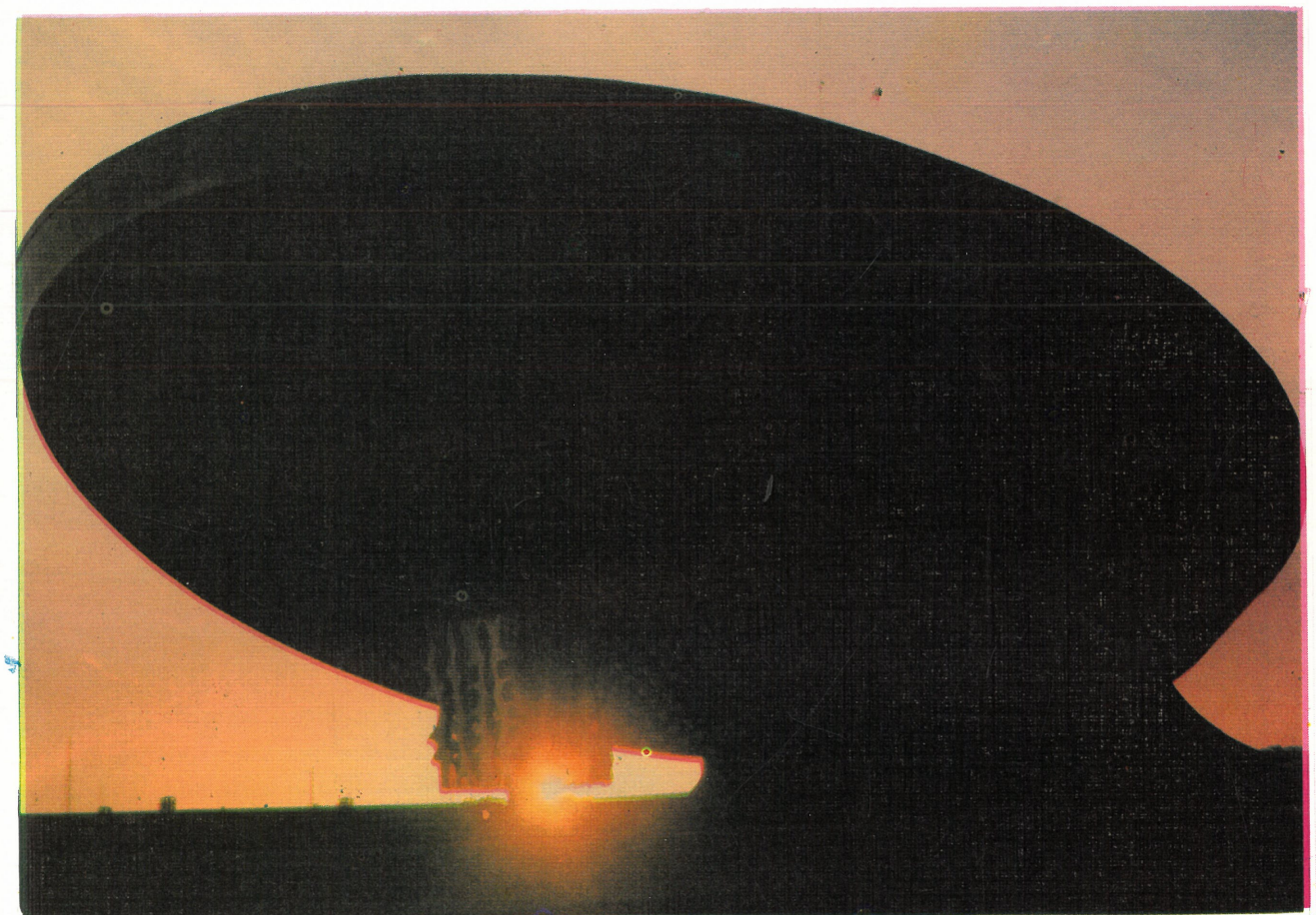


Al-Rahhal was born in Baghdad in 1926.
 He got a diploma in art from the Fine Arts Institute in Baghdad in 1947.
 He joined the Baghdad Group of Modern Art in 1953.
 He graduated from the Fine Arts Academy in Rome in 1954.
 His main works are: The Mother, The March Monument and The Monument to the Unknown Soldier.
 He died in 1986.

Khalid Al-Rahhal

1926-1986

Farouq Yousif



The Monument to the Unknown Soldier, last major work by Khalid Al-Rahhal before his death

During the last years of his life, Khalid Al-Rahhal made great works of art that would guarantee him an out-standing place on the list of Iraqi artists. His shift to great sculptural works made a change in critics' view in his favour.

He reached the peak of his artistic career with the Monument to the Unknown Soldier. Thus, his dream to achieve a work of art matching Jewad Selim's

Monument of Liberty came true. However, the effects of Al-Rahhal on the movement of Iraqi sculpture are not as much evident and valuable as those of Jewad Selim.

Both, Jewad Selim and Al-Rahhal were members of the Baghdad Group of Modern Art.

Al-Rahhal was deeply attached to woman who in his view, stood for a pure value. He did not use

woman as a symbol though, he drew inspiration from women figure in ancient Iraqi art, particularly the Assyrian women, with their large eyes and power-suggesting features. But he, on the other hand, did not make use of the symbolic implications which supported the apparent presence of women in that art. His treatment of this point was sensuous rather than intellectual.



Women Bathing

In fact, he was enchanted by women, whether they are mothers, sisters or lovers. They provided him with a profound sense of life, dynamism, warmth and passion. Women, in his view, do not live in the shade or on a social margin. They hold the reins of things in hand whether through their being in a social position or through their direct contact with beauty. Al-Rahhal gave expression to his social affiliation and patriotic feeling in one of his most suggestive statues, The Mother. There are other statuettes executed by Al-Rahhal representing women in various poses. These statuettes give us a clear idea of Al-Rahhal's

view of women, revealing a great deal of lust for women — which Al-Rahhal managed to show with nobility and fairness.

Al-Rahhal's relation with women reveals a genuine feeling which other artists try to conceal or to express indirectly. He was bold in giving expression to his ideas of women which are the main motif of his works.

He wanted to highlight women as a major force of aesthetics. He brought them to the whirlpool of nature but he did not make women representative of its elements as is known in ancient Iraqi mythology which shows women as a symbol of fertility and growth. To him, women are the whole and the essence at the same time. He tried to show this through a mural that included many faces of one woman.

One difficulty which Al-Rahhal's art underwent is his attitude to heritage, particularly the artistic heritage. In fact, Al-Rahhal showed variation in giving ex-

pression to his relationship to heritage. We find that some artists such as Jewad Selim and Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab took a contemplative and selective attitude towards heritage, while Al-Rahhal was busy with the force of the ancient works of art and not with their intellectual background or interpretations. He gave much of his attention to the Assyrian art. While he succeeded in discovering the force of sculptural unit, he failed to discover force. This is evident in the March Monument. If we have a careful look at the units from which the monument is made separately, we will find them magnificent, suggestive and accurate.

However, a look at the monument as a whole does not suggest such a thing, if not much less. That is to say we find the parts forceful but the general formation is weak. This reveals the pure technical aspect in the Al-Rahhal's experience and attempt to grasp and draw inspiration from heritage. He concentrated on the points of visual force in the Assyrian artworks without taking notice of the points of meaning, significance, symbolism and intellectual depth of these works.

Al-Rahhal was not merely a sculptor but also a good painter despite his modesty. His skill as a painter was no less than his skill as a sculptor though some prefer to consider him a painter rather than a sculptor.

The problems of a sculptor are as those of a painter except for the fact that painting provides the chance of transmitting passion directly and without delay.

This aspect was in the interest of Al-Rahhal who was right in choosing the bull as a basic unit through which he sought to deal with various subjects. Only in this respect, Al-Rahhal was symbolic. The bull, in his view, was the symbol of masculinity, absolute freedom, frank coherence and activity. During his last years, Al-Rahhal tried to embody these traits in his paintings.

Although Al-Rahhal had only displayed few of his works at home for he spent a long time in Italy, this does not underrate him among the pioneer artists who saw art as a means of salvation and serving humanity.

Translated by Adnan Salman



A Bride at the Wedding Night

Modern Iraqi Ceramics

Nouri Al-Rawi



Siham Al-Saudi

The ancient Iraqi potter might not have used an intermediate agent between his ideas and the consequent effects, since he did not perhaps wish to waste time tackling complicated questions. He must have got used to working spontaneously producing a pot: a cup or a dummy substituting a statue of the deity.

It is quite likely that our potter, who lived in Iraqi settlements in the sixth millennium B.C., made no preliminary sketches, before moulding and baking his clay into a human figure. But could such a clay statuette serve as a starting-point for this article?

Let us take the following pottery samples dating back to different historical periods, and examine

them closely. What expression do they convey and what ideas do they infer?

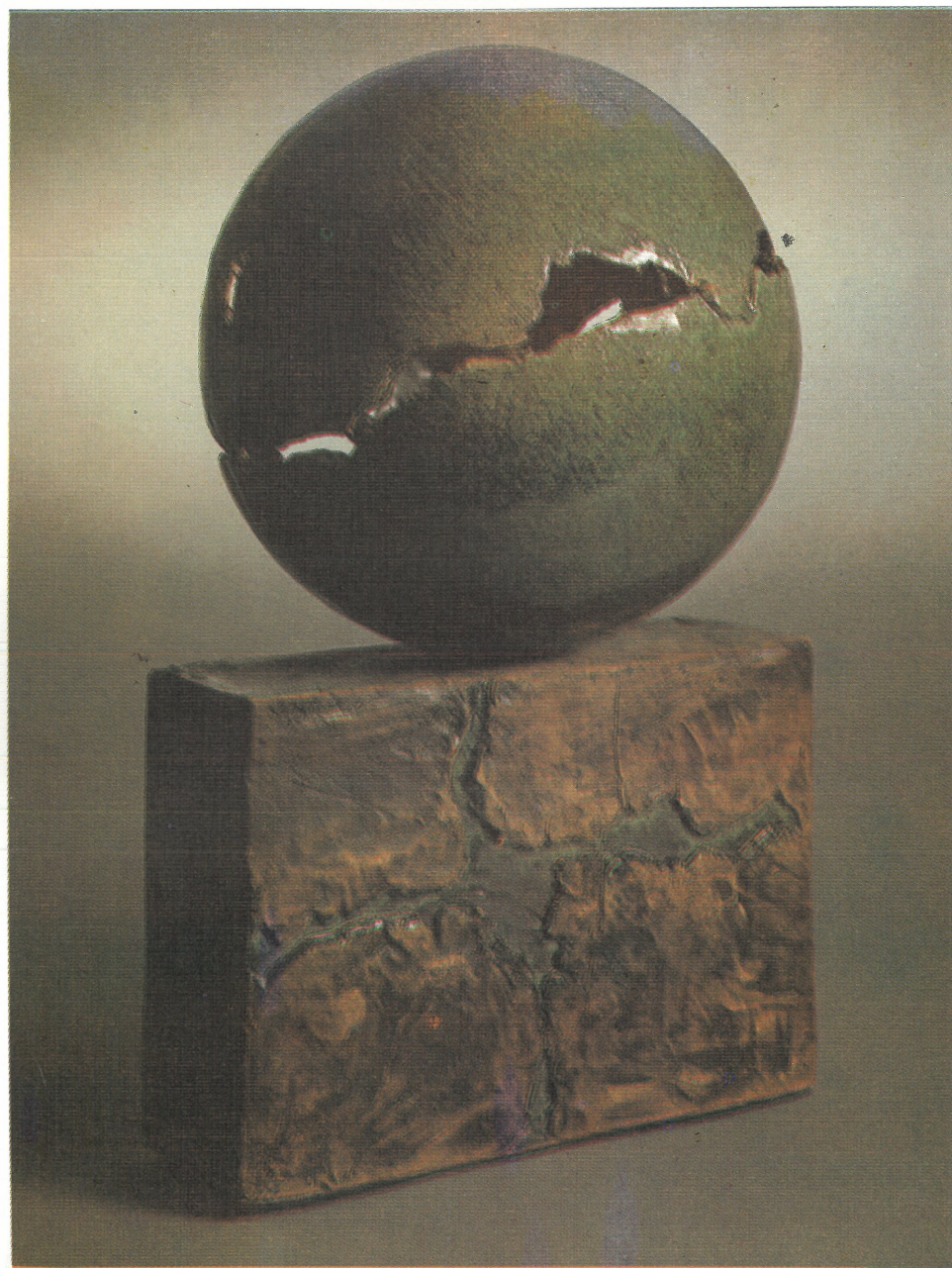
A spherical pot from Hassouna site, which dates back to the fifth millennium B.C. is rough and coarse as it certainly had been made by hand when the potter had hardly a rotating wooden stand.

In contrast to this, pottery of Tel Halaph, which is also hand-made, has fine edges and is covered by colourful decorations.

Somewhere in between beautiful clay dummies could be found bearing rather main and infantile appearance. Archaeologists say they are embodiments of mother-goddesses, while others maintain



Sa'ad Shakir



Tariq Ibrahim

that they are symbols of motherhood.

While moving from one millennium to a more recent one, we seem hardly aware of the fact that the circular potter-wheel is an Iraqi invention of the fourth century B.C., and that as we draw closer to the agrarian age, we begin to observe a noticeable limitation in colours which are now confined to brown and black. When these colours are applied, the soft pottery looks as though it has been bathed with the darkness of the Sumerian night.

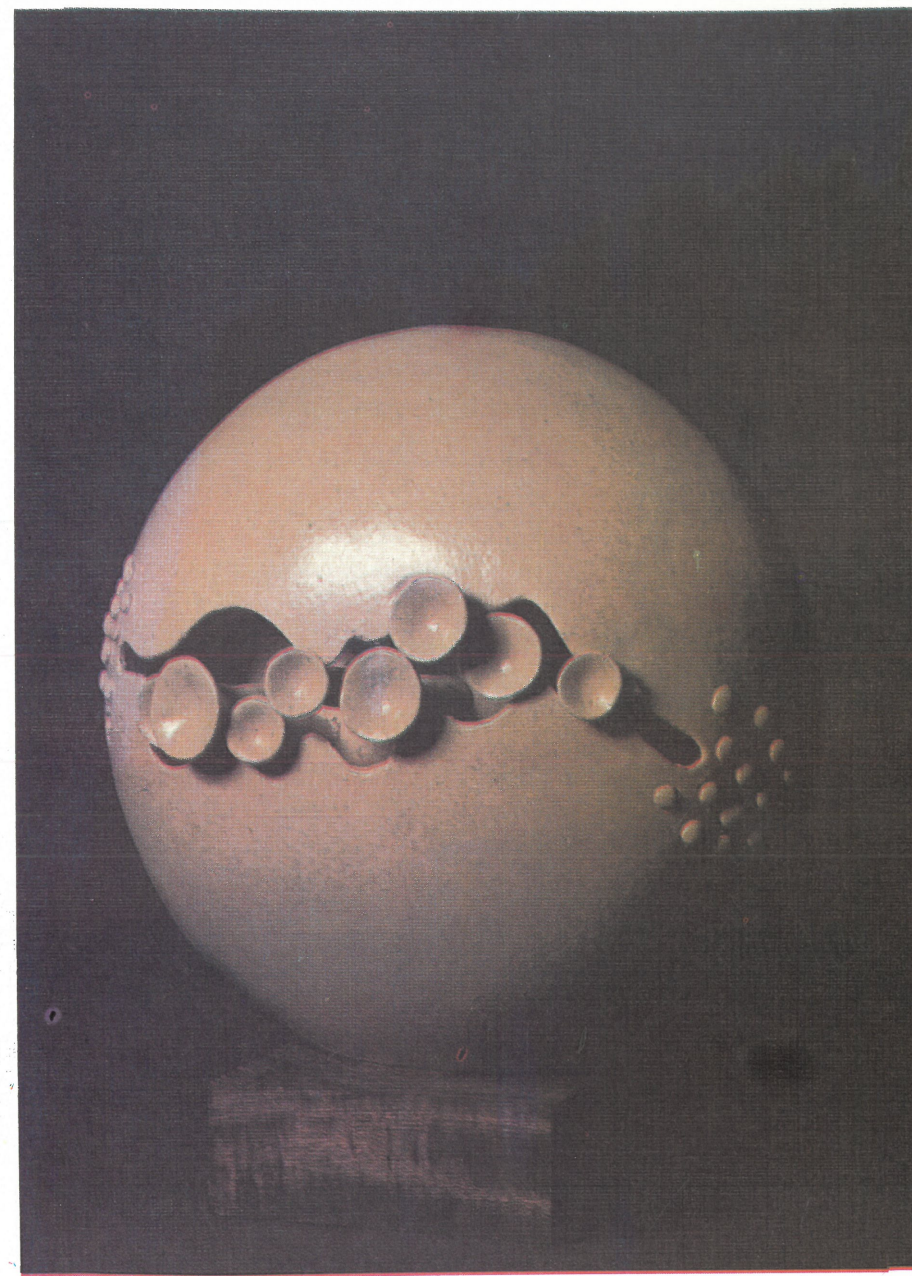
The Babylonian walls have preserved magnificent mythological animals, lions and bulls, all executed in nice colourful pottery.

Later on and as a result of applying Arabic calligraphy and illustrations, pottery became deeper and

richer since it combined the symbol of man and is yearning for discovering the eternal truth existing in nature itself.

There is definitely something that connects man with nature, softening his sympathetic tendencies, promoting his inclination towards the beautiful things in nature and turning his patterns and calligraphy, particularly those in the Kufic style, into poems rich in heavenly colours.

Another architectural art to be noted in this respect is that of the Abbasid era, which is characterized by "dantelle" teacher composed of light and shade spreading a suggestive view on the walls of Al-Mustansirya School, the Abbasid Palace and Mirjan Mosque, these being the only surviving remnants of



Sa'ad Shakir

the late Abbasid era. A cursory look on these walls makes us appreciate those fine works which raised simple pottery to a level of spontaneous radiation.

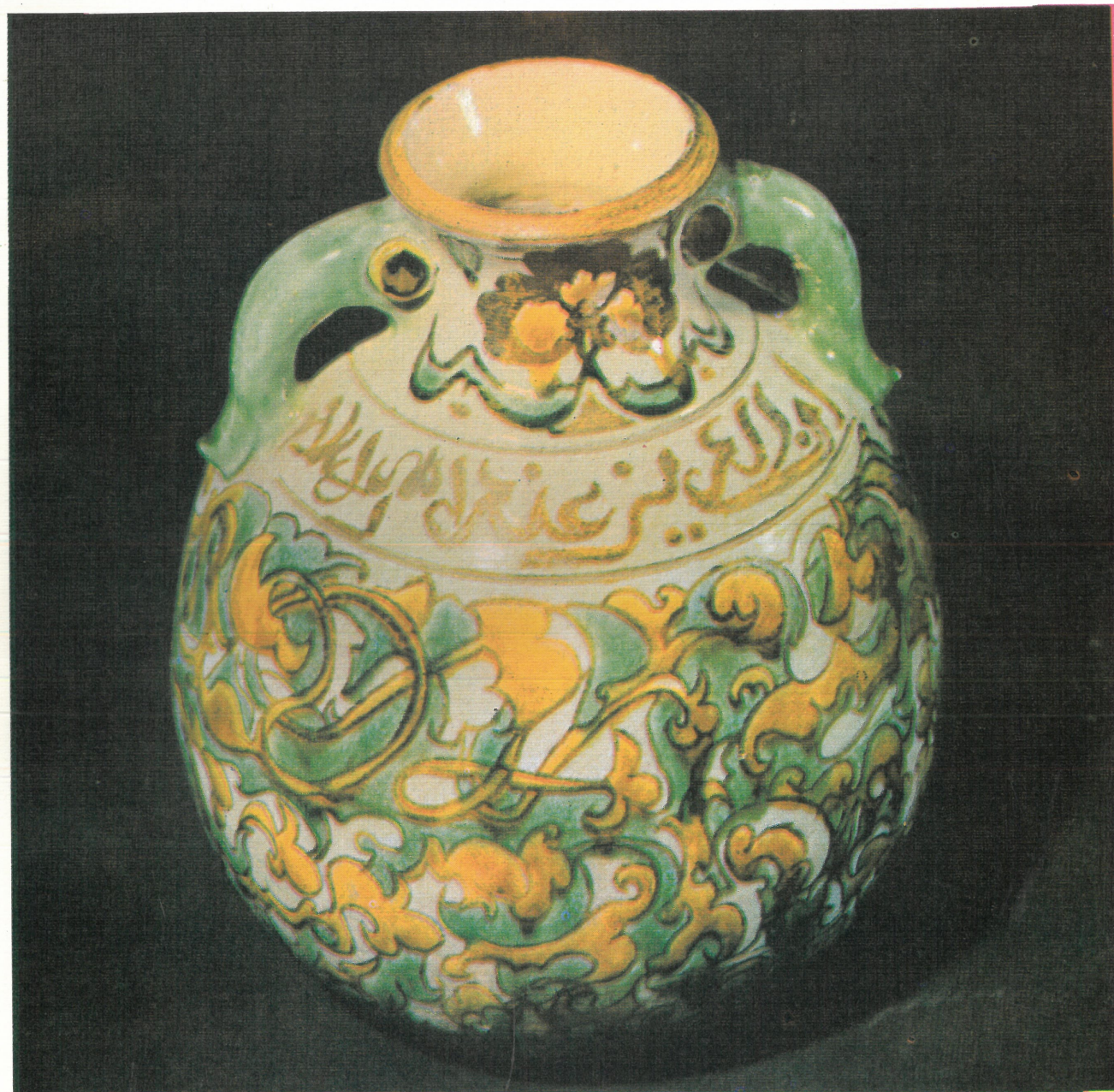
In 1954, the first furnace for the production of ceramics was built at the Baghdad Institute of Fine Arts under the direct supervision of two teachers at the Institute, namely the late Jawad Selim and Faik Hassan.

It coincided with the creation, for the first time of a department of ceramics at the institute and began functions in 1955 with the help of a medium electric-powered furnace.

From that modest beginning the ceramic movement proceeded to widen its scope covering works executed by teachers of the Institute and of the Academy of Fine Arts (set up in 1967), and subse-

quently incorporated in the University of Baghdad.

The originality and innovation in Iraqi ceramics may be attributed both to the position assumed by the artist, maintaining a relative remoteness from direct western artistic influences, and to the pure artistic attitude he took vis-a-vis market temptations. Thus, he was capable of preserving his spontaneity and intrinsic purity. Although the Iraqi artist belongs physically to the present age and shows conscious understanding of art trends throughout the world, a belief has been growing within his inner self, that true art stems from the land whose wonderful clay he is turning into artistic shapes. The artist, thus, began to shape up from its synthetic elements and the symbols



Dhia Ghafouri

of its successive civilizations, what may form a new experiment that links the genuine past and the dynamic present, displaying the drama of contemporary Arab life and reflecting its accelerating tempo.

It is with clay that we begin our work and by it we produce good ceramics. This may sound a bit strange.

However, the fact is that good ceramics is made when we are able to smell the clay while it is still available naturally. Thus, we may sense in advance, the flame of maturity because simplicity, sincerity, tenderness and goodness are all incarnated in pottery.

Clay of different grades and colours exists in Iraq.

Therefore, continuous tests are necessary to insure good results. Ferrous rocks in Rawandouz, for instance, give pottery reddish tint, while the desert red sand is employed for glazing. Marble on the other hand obtained from the Mosul quarries could be substituted for ferrous oxide. The white soft clay may be used as an alkalic base for glazing, etc...

When it comes to execution, very few ceramists prefer heat generated by burning wood or petrol to that generated by electricity, sacrificing thereby,



Muqbil Al-Zahawi



Abla Al-Azzawi



Tariq Ibrahim

guaranteed results in the hope of obtaining excellent though haphazard results.

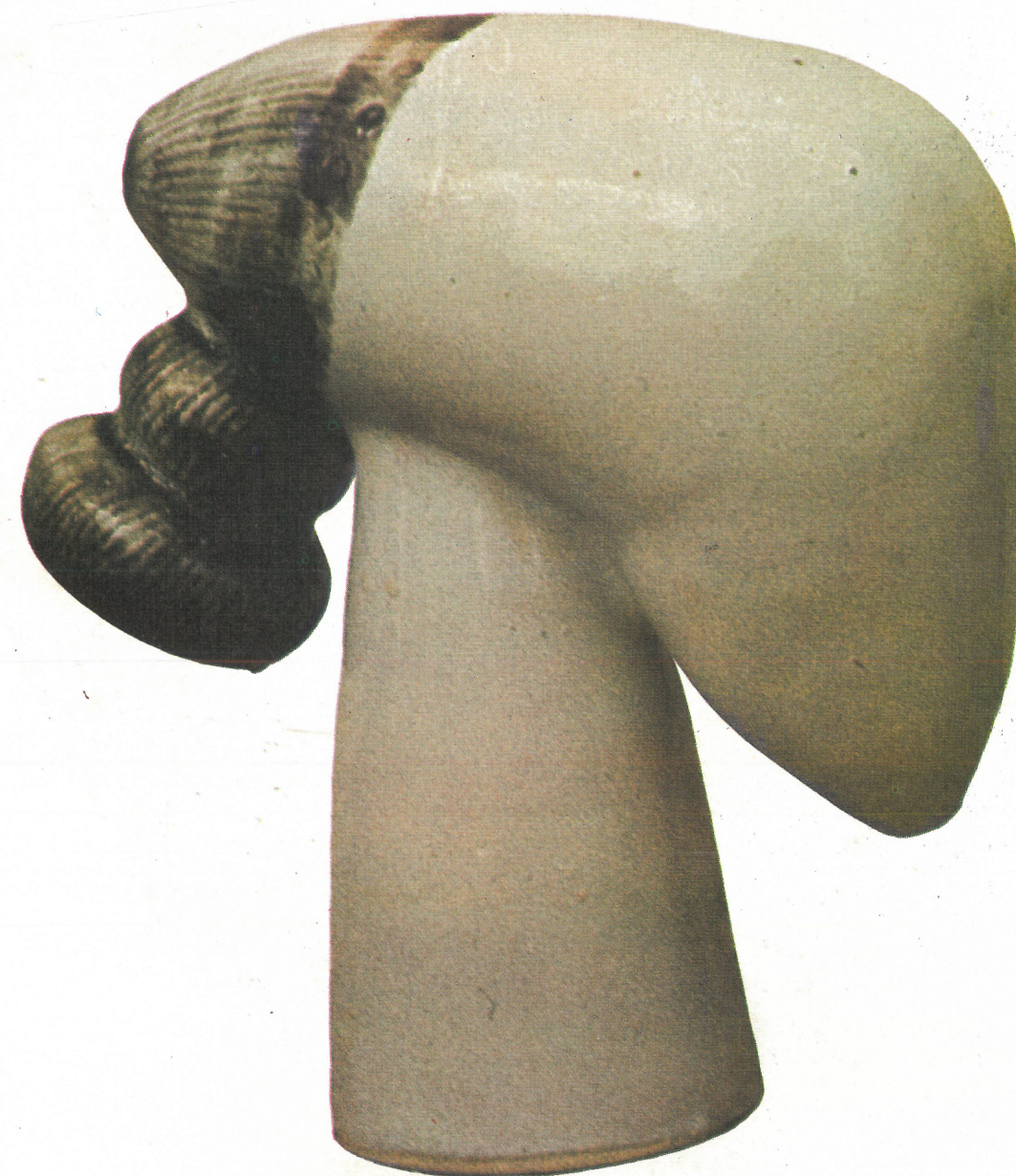
The art movement in Iraq is part of the worldwide art movement. Though the Iraqi experiment in modern methods has only recently started, Iraqi ceramists are resolved that traditions should be respected in order to produce splendid ceramics.

Today, the works of Iraqi ceramists have become prominent after years of hard work and dedication.

The works of Sa'ad Shakir, for example, introduce fanciful formations derived from the spontaneity of

plants, shells, mushrooms and natural rock. They extend as far away as cosmic space to bring back miniature figures of volcanic vents reflecting a combination of mythological flowers and the wonderful phenomena of nature. When the artist expresses his view of the universe, he means how he feels his way through a virtual labyrinth to communicate with the common people. From nature itself he gets his flowers and thorns with which he works out his artistic scratching.

Spontaneity of formation constitutes a distinct fea-



Vresh David Kanikianian

ture of the works of Abla Al-Azzawi, as she often abandons the wheel to let her hand play freely and spontaneously.

In contrast, Mohammed Al-Eraibi remains loyal to traditions and meticulously observes the balance of form created by the musical rhythm of the hand and the monotonous rotation of the wheel.

On the other hand the works of Siham Al-Saudi seem to have acquired the stamp of free plastic experience. In her recent exhibition a graphic touch and lyricism of free composition were easily detectable.

The formations of the works of Shniar Abdullah, on the other hand, acquire their raison d'être from the purity of limpid natural springs.

Like Abla Al-Azzawi, Tarik Ibrahim tries to make his formation by hand in an effort to bring balance between the artistic quality of ceramics and daily usage.

Nuha Al-Radhi remains secluded in her own world away from those art researches pressing on with her spontaneous compositions which sometimes bear cherubic features and influence of Iraqi folklore.

Leaving our present age aside, we encounter a potter from Sumer represented by Mukbil Al-Zahawi who is trying to revive old heritage and raise it to an extremely modern level. Yet, his works are still imbued with the fragrance of scents bearing traces of the incantations sung during the royal rituals at Ur.

Translated by Badia Ameen



Painting by Shakir Hassan Al-Sa'eed

Ali Al-Hilli

Born in 1931.

Graduated at College of Law in 1952.

In addition to his poetry collections, he published many research papers, studies, translations and criticisms on poetry, story, music and singing.

Founding member of the Iraqi Writers Union in 1958.

His main published works:

The Poet, poetry, 1958, Baghdad.

The Ba'th's Revolution, poetry, 1963, Beirut.

The Homeless, poetry, 1970, Cairo.

The Candle Tears, poetry, 1983, New Delhi.

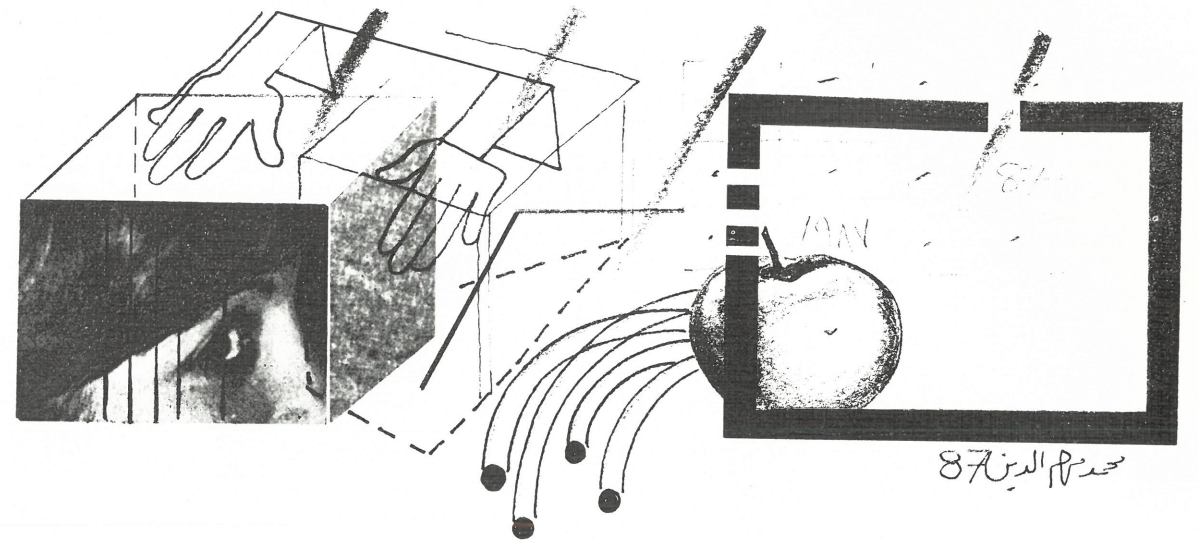
His poetry is pregnant with painful and checked passion, trying to break all barriers and transcend frustrations and seas of tears. His poems arouse overwhelming rejoicing at a great dream, the essence of true poetry.

A Sunny Dream

There were no other crafts and ships.
Your lips sailed on my naked lips,
and whispered a long deep story
during our dancing, when I was sorry.
Then I drank all of your tiny tears
spotting on the glass of last fears
None can feel the human glory
except the real poetic sense of love ...,
and when I handled your soft shoulders under
the blind darkness and above
I felt the moon shining from your fingers,
reflecting the lights for our steps again.
Hence we forgot there was a crying rain or there
was a creeping groaning pain in our
closed hearts and dreamy lips.
There were no other crafts and ships.
Your lips sailed on my naked lips.

A Burning

In the depth of my consciousness
There is a statue of a bright human being
flaming strongly and for ever
As a fiery tempest of rebellion
shining in my heart, so I drink it
from the hunger of my disobedience
so don't be surprised. Oh! my love
there is such deep tenderness
of forgiveness in my blood.
There are many ancient cemeteries
in the Autumn fields of the spiders
And their high domes are my bones
Their canopies are my shrouds
Oh! my sweetness, I feel the breath
of my melodies is burning
and the remnants of the soft love
is scattering in my empty hands
so don't drink my annoyance,
the soft prayer of my eyelids.
Oh! my sweetness, I will return
to you, to our wild love
then we turn from our second sin
to our lost, pale tomorrow
in order to starve again and again
for real food of our consciousness.



Hasab al-Shaikh Ja'far

Born in 1942 in a village of Meisan Province.

After concluding his secondary study he was granted a scholarship in the USSR.

Obtained an MA degree in literature from the Gorky Institute (Moscow) in 1966.

He has published the following collections of poems as well as translation works:

God's Palm-Tree (Poems — 1969), *The Wooden Bird* (Poems — 1972), *Sumerian Lady's Visit* (Poems — 1974), *Through The Wall*, *In the Mirror* (Poems — 1977), *Mayakovski* (Translation work — 1979), *Yesenin* (Translation work — 1980), *Aleksandr Blok* (Translation work — 1981), *The Dervish's Ash* (Autobiography — 1987).

Story of the Guest

Is it a guest?

That steppe-dweller? In the neighbourhood of those banks we camp once a year. It was said she was infatuated by some of our shepherds. But when we come near she turns away her face. Yet as the southern dusk dies down we have a glimpse of her among our steeds

Patting their manes,
Or hugging a lofty neck.
For some time

Our tents in the thick plains lower their shoulders. Is there anything but the flame quivering in our horizon, or the morning smoke, to remind a neighbour of us? I was only ten, leading the mares to the bank. Here is our neighbour approaching the horses, whispering something to them.

I was only a child.
But I remember us: whenever it is midnight, something wakes us. What neighing? What running in the neighbourhood?

The mares are scattered on the thick plains, all wet.
Who has excited them?
In the tender nights,
blue stars kindle in women's eyes
just out of a swim. Their low beds
are their own handwork. A blonde dawn
paces on the sand; rich dugs turn pale in copper pots.
Maidens smell of dew with their water jars.
Fires kindle gold in dung-holes, raising green with dawn.
A summer
starved, pecked, on the plain, by gray kites. Can it revive
in us a thing except the taste of dry grass?
A tent is folded, luggage is packed. On the plains: another pasture.
Her eyes: towards the horses; her hands:
in the morning ashes. Have the meadow horses left her a
thing except nightwaking and yearning to grazing?
I was twenty,
The banks filled my eyes. Her tardy steps among her neighbours
aroused in my depth a yawning panther.
I saw me in a daze,
looking up, and the fire dying in the palmtrees.
The evening
gray bird alighted. The horses made to the bank
There she is patting their manes or hugging a lofty neck.
Whenever my steps surprise her she turns,
wary, staring sharply at me.
Whenever the night is at the midst,
the plain echoes neighing and stampeding; the villages barking.
Shall I run with the horses, with the vicious burning of silver
in my eyes?

A line of sea-gulls the summer sent over palmtrees and water. We departed, and the late morning on the sand beach seemed a bone left from feast sacrifice.

Our horses are on the reins. What neighing, a mare on the plains, with coloured ankles. The scent of henna excited her neighing
Unsaddled
or tamed, grazing at will
In winter
The southern moonlet devours the hay at root.
Or crouches naked our doors, begging for our fires.

Translated by Dr. A.W. Lu'Lu'a

The Wooden Bird

At midnight on the empty roads
Is a naked woman
Weary of love.
In the empty sky
Of the open space
Is a heedless fly ...
(When we came back from the forest
Your eyes smiled
And in your hand there was a large bunch
Of wild and wet flowers.
The flying hair is a pomegranate blossom
And the two lips are two peaches.)
At your leisure time
You slipped down
The scene collapsed
And the paints came off your face
So take your weary smile
To the empty roads

Translated by Mohammed Darweesh

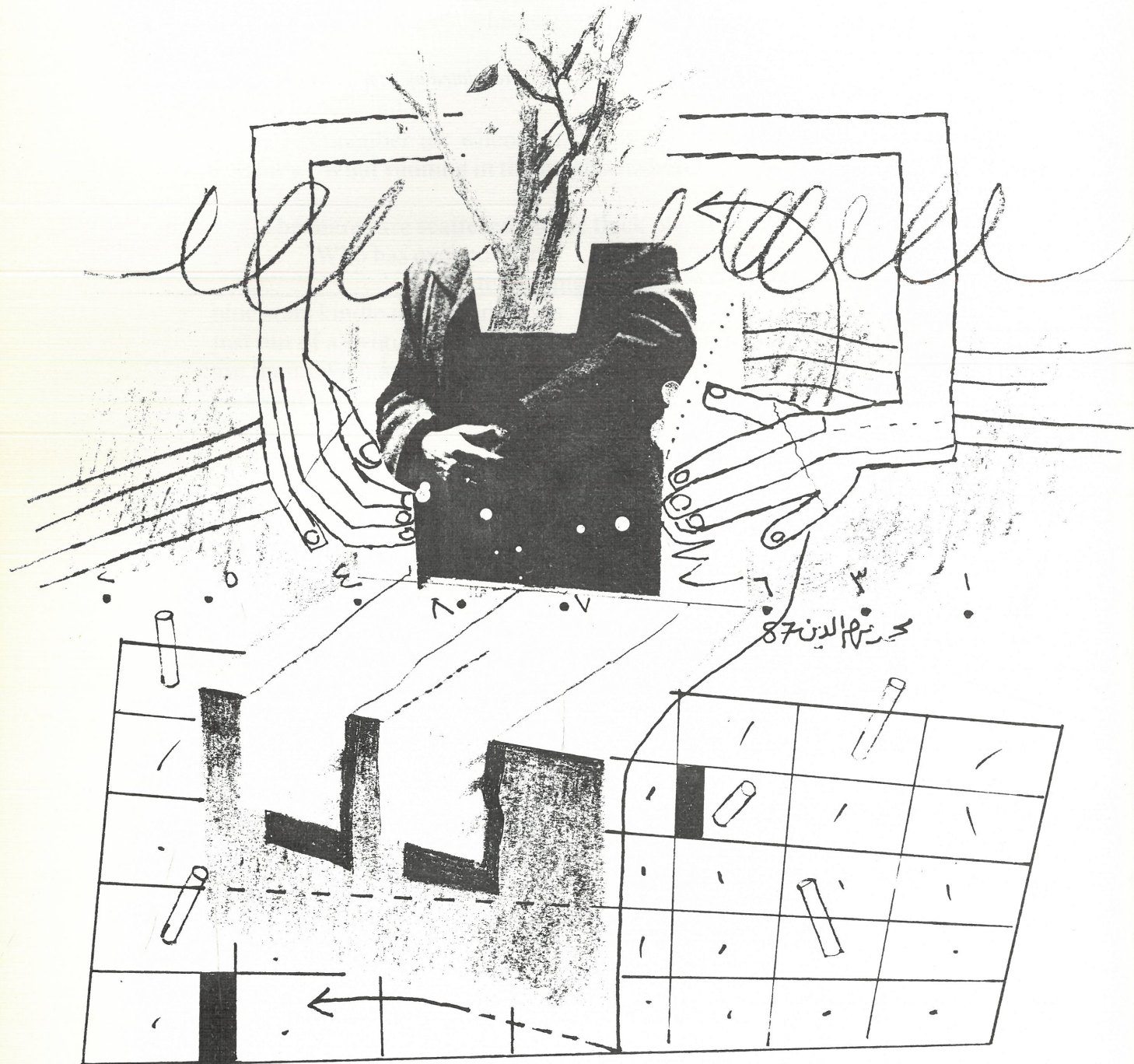
Mohammed Jameel Shalash

Born in 1930 at the town of Al-Khalis, Diyala Province.
Obtained his BA in Arabic Language, University of Baghdad in 1954.
Obtained his MA in Arabic Literature, University of Baghdad, 1972 for his thoughtful study of the prominent Iraqi poet Al-Sharif Al-Radhi.

His volumes of poems include:
Love and Freedom, 1974, *Forgiveness*, 1974, *Death and Birth*, 1974, *Seven Ears From April*, 1976, *The Complete Poetical Works (Vol. I)*, 1978, *The Ba'th*, 1980, *The Silence Archipelago*, 1982.

The Pelican

O, Pelican!
And now
There is nothing except Carthage,
And the night,
And the silence which has enveloped us,
And the beats of our hearts,
Which are absorbed by the whispering waves.
O, Pelican!
And now
Where the sea, the absolute and purity
Are all in my hand,
And where the realm of slaves
Shall not be my own
And shall not frustrate my tomorrow's dreams.
Now
You who release my melodies,
And possess my heart,
And standing like the pelican,
Let me
Sing and die
For only once
Just like a pelican.



The Nay⁽¹⁾

In the Mathnawi⁽²⁾ of Sheikh Jalal Eddin⁽³⁾
I heard a heart thumping
Like a nay, weary and melancholic,
Anguished by yearning
For its roots.
And thus, it preferred silence to moaning.
And unlike others, it no longer
Turned into a poor clown
Wailing,
Or laughing,
Or crying with mourners.

Silence and Monotony

The dead insomnia, alienation and melancholy,
The painful boredom, loneliness and monotony,
Are far from preventing me from the ecstasy of writing,
And far from checking the sound of rababa⁽⁴⁾.
In the silence of this wood.
So let this cloud rain with blood
And let the melancholy rain
Wash away the sorrows of the silent rababa
In the night of this declining and downtrodden world
And this wood.

Translated by Mohammed Darwish

1. Nay: A flute without mouthpiece, made of bamboo in different sizes, which, when blown, is held in a slantic forward position.

2. Mathnawi: A label used to describe one of the poetic forms composed in couplets. It flourished during the Ottoman era.

3. Sheikh Jalal Eddin Al-Roumi (1207-1273): A great Sufi (mystic) poet who, after a great deal of travels in Baghdad, Mecca and Damascus settled in the city of Konia, Turkey and died there. He established his literary fame after he had written his long Sufi Mathnawi poems.

4. Rababa: A stringed instrument of the Arabs resembling the fiddle with one of three strings.

The Helmet and the Sea Gull

As the fluttering of a white dream,
Among the remains of the drowned village,
It was going to and fro,
Busy,
Carrying in its bill the remains of objects
From a nursery school
Destroyed by the enemy's malice.
* * *

And as a death boat,
In a night of dark nightmares,
Scaring me,
Wrecking me,
Was a soldier's helmet
Floating on the water
And sleeping to the music of silence
And to the fluttering of martyrs' hearts.
* * *

The helmet was perhaps my brother's,
Or my friend's,
Or it was of an enemy killed here;
No matter whose it was,
It is a testimony that war is death
And peace is life.
* * *

And that is why,
Between a bullet ... and a bullet,
Like a white dream,
The Sea Gull
Was alighting on the helmet
Busy with the remains of things,
And like all honest folk,
It was building a nest
For the happy comers of tomorrow.
* * *

Fathers will go,
Sons will come,
And the helmet will remain,
Living in the memory of water.

Translated by Dr. Salman D. Al-Wasiti

Abdul Sattar Nasir

- Born in Baghdad, 1946.
- Published the following collections of short stories:
 - Desire At A Late Time* (Baghdad, 1968)
 - Over The Cold Body* (Baghdad, 1969),
 - The Bird of Truth* (Baghdad, 1974)
 - An Outline Of Sharif Nader's Life* (Damascus, 1975)
 - Please, Do Not Steal The Flower* (Damascus, 1978)
 - Once And For Ever* (Baghdad, 1979)
 - The Sun Is Iraqi* (Baghdad, 1986)
 - Love Before A Firing Squad* (Cairo, 1985)
 - Rain Under The Sun* (Cairo, 1986)
 - No Dinner After The Night* (Cairo, 1987).

Abdul Sattar Nasir is one of the Iraqi story-writers of the 1960s, a period of experimental trends in Iraqi story writing. Ever since he has continued to write driven by the need to reveal his personal, social and political experience. Thus, his stories are weighed down by social, psychological and intellectual pressures. Moreover, the hero in most of these stories is confused, vague and haunted by mysterious forces. Nasir tries to present his attitude towards the world and events through the eyes of his hero who stares at the world with innocence and surprise and sometimes with a primitive instinct.

However, some of his stories break away from the personal and unusual framework to embrace the experience of life, society and war.

Secret Rooms

Fear was the first thing that struck me when I entered this city which was living in commotion and immersed in astonishment and starvation.

* * *

I did not know what secret was hidden in the first room of Al-Sa'ada Hotel. Two months had passed since my family kicked me out. Apart from my sensual pursuits and my search for a job, nothing was preoccupy-

ing my mind except the room which was still closed since I came to this place. It had not been occupied even at the busiest times of the year.

Inside Al-Sa'ada Hotel which was crowded with poor guests, you could see people overwhelmed with joy and silence. No one was interested in the room or took notice of it. One evening, I ventured to ask the hotel manager why he kept that room vacant. He frowned and ignored me. But

when I gave him the second month's rent, I deliberately whispered, "Tell me, Sir, why is the room closed to everybody even guests?"

He raised his eyes and replied, coughing, "I do not know why you ask about something trivial? This place is not my own and I don't care about anything other than my fees."

I cast a look around and heard screams at the bottom of the staircase and hastily said, "Don't you think that one month's rent for this room is a good sum of money?" "Sir," he muttered as he stared at me, "this is Othman Al-Fakih's business. If you are bold enough, go and ask him. This has nothing to do with me."

On the stairs, I could make out a massive figure coming up towards us. The manager was listening while his features turned yellow. Just like him, I was waiting for the coming figure. By habit, we used to look at the entrance of the hotel to see what a new comer was thrown to us by a bar, hospital or abandoned country.

But at the end of the stairs we could guess who the comer was even before he opened the door.

"He is Mr. Othman Al-Fakih. I wonder why has he come?" I heard the manager say.

Othman Al-Fakih had invested his money in construction. He had five hotels, a cinema house, a court for family tenants only and several shops and stores. The hotel guests were afraid of him for no particular reason except that if he evicted any of them, he would not find a hotel of similar conditions. The reason may lie in the hotel's low room prices or its closeness to the city centre.

Once the manager found himself face to face with Mr. Othman Al-Fakih, he held his breath and motioned to me to leave them alone. But I, for no particular reason, stayed put, not knowing what to do. Within seconds, there was a spate of questions.

"Why haven't you put up the rent?" Mr. Al-Fakih shouted. Mr. Fakih's question set me thinking of the poor tenants of my like.

"But, Sir, you didn't tell me that. How can I do anything without your permission?" said the manager. I could see his hands rest-

ing on his thighs as if they were paralysed by something mysterious.

"Why did you stare at us? Go to your room. This is not a cafe," Al-Fakih glowered at me almost sending out foam as he shouted.

I do not know why I kept silent, though I was one of the hotel guests, and he had no right to restrict my movement.

Through my window, I listened again to Al-Fakih's cries and the manager's humble replies until they agreed on increasing the rent. This was bad news for the poor people who could not afford to leave Al-Sa'ada Hotel.

Some seconds later, Mr. Al-Fakih went down. We were sizing him up and down and scrutinizing his strange features. He was under forty. His shoes indicated that he was not much of a walker. His dark grey trousers revealed an excess flesh on his thighs. There was a horrible defect under his belt, said to be an inflation in the ureter or a wrath from heaven inflicted upon him. But the fact was that this thing was no more than excess excretion of hormone which grew under his navel. It was due to his previous state and temper which flared up wherever he went.

"The hotel rent has increased." The manager looked at us and said apologetically, "I'm sorry. I tried to talk him out of it but to no avail. Some of you may know of this."

"I think Al-Baidha' Hotel is cheaper," suggested one guest, a sick man whose son used to send him some money just enough to pay for the rent and meals.

"Do you intend to leave us?" asked the manager. "This is something regretful. But Al-Baidha' Hotel is owned by Othman too. Besides, it is not as clean as it should be."

"When you receive my son's remittance, please send it to Al-Baidha' Hotel," said the sick man as he intended to leave. "I don't want to add to his burden. He is still young. He must have a passion for life and women, and what he has won't be enough for him."

"Wait," I shouted unconsciously while he was moving away. "I feel like you about the rent. I could not pay that much. I will come

along to Al-Baidha' Hotel, for I don't know where it is," I whispered in his ear.

No one else left the hotel. I looked at the manager while I went down. I heard him saying with deep concern, "Beware of Al-Fakih. He has seen you here and might not be pleased to see you there."

I said goodbye as we went out to the street, staring at peoples' faces as if we had not seen them in such sorrow and langour.

The buildings which lined the street were of one colour including low houses and shops tarnished by rainfall. The people we passed by were not smiling, they looked preoccupied or absent-minded. I did not know why I kept staring at everything as if I were looking for something lost. We crossed the street slowly feeling sorry for leaving Al-Sa'ada Hotel. Still I felt some relief as I got away from the closed room which I had not known its secret.

"What's the matter with you?" said the sick man as he pulled my hand when he saw me gazing at peoples' faces going by. "We are standing by Al-Baidha' Hotel. Let's go up."

As I looked up I saw an old sign-board of the hotel's name. Underneath is written in bold type, "Proprietor Othman Al-Fakih." We went up the stairs. The cracked walls had a salty colour.

"Two others," a lipsing tenant said.

"They must be victims of the crises" a weary sound answered. "Why don't they go to hospitals?"

I could not keep silent. "We haven't come from hospitals. What are you raving on about? We've moved from Al-Sa'ada Hotel."

"Al-Sa'ada's rent went up one dirham, that is why we left it," said the sick man.

"Tell me where the water is?" a strong voice came from a room on the right side. We turned our heads to the right side. The sick man laughed. Eyes turned to him. The hotel's manager kicked his table and shouted, "The hotel stands on a place higher than ground level. Don't you know this?" shouted the hotel manager kicking the table at which he was sitting.

The man shouted back from his room and broke some dishes. The manager rose up swearing and cursing. I was standing there hoping that this unexpected quarrel would die so they would begin searching for rooms for us to stay in.

Early in the evening, when the poor, the very poor would sit in semi-circle drinking tea and listening to the radio, I had to listen to the news to see what was going on in various parts of the world. But I would listen for some minutes only to get some news on the three islands: the suffering of Africa, the bloody war of the North and the election of America's smart fox, Nixon.

Later, I got out to a window overlooking the street. I looked at the drunks and night-shift workers. I saw a drunk whore who looked up at me but showed no interest in me. I fumbled in my pocket for money and went out.

At a sharp turn of the neighbourhood, I satisfied my lust and suddenly Al-Baidha' Hotel's guests took us by surprise. They were laughing and staring at our faces.

"Hurry up; there are many clients behind you."

Al-Baidha' Hotel seemed totally empty. I wandered in the hotel's corridors. Everything looked suspicious. The rooms were numbered at random: 1, 6, 4, 18. The room No.1 was closed. It would make you feel lonely while you stood by its door which was locked with nails and whose key hole was stuffed with cork. I jumped up to the window above the door, but I could see nothing. Once again, I jumped. No sooner had the manager seen me than he frowned and cried: "What are doing, Sir? Do you want to make everything upside down?"

I stood still. Some guests gazed at me. Then, they gathered around me and laughed sarcastically.

"I thought he was a wise man. I couldn't believe what he has been doing."

"He is the reject of cheap bars. Look at his eyes. There is no trace of shame in them."

"He may be a thief? Who knows?"

I turned my neck from one side to

another. The faces seemed unfamiliar to me. I wished to spit in every face staring at me.

"I don't want trouble here. Please look for another hotel" I heard the manager saying. I turned towards the closed room and pleaded to him, "Tell me what is there in that room?"

Then I looked around at the eyes of the guests and cried, "Why don't you ask him about the secret of this closed room?"

"They are not as curious as you are," the manager answered.

"Why should be interested in a mere closed room," one of them uttered.

I stared at their faces and into their humble eyes.

"It is not a mere closed room," I said as I was about to leave. Before I stretched my hand to my bag, I felt the manager was behind me. I turned back and saw the manager weeping. I could not believe it. The tears were running down his cheeks onto his chin. He caught my hand, got the bag down and burst into tears.

"I'm sorry. Go back to your room."

I felt I needed to cry loudly to release the bitterness which crept into my veins. Once I calmed down, "What's the matter with you?" I asked. Don't you think I have the right to ask about the secret of the closed rooms I notice in every hotel I stay at?"

"If you are really interested, why don't you ask Othman Al-Fakih?"

"Is there any person who knows the secret other than him?"

"Perhaps, but don't you know we will be thrown out, if we say anything?"

I looked at him, unable to believe that the manager who wept and who knew the secret of the room was after all afraid of revealing the secret of the room.

"Sorry, there is nothing that would keep me here," I said, as I took my bag, and went down the stairs.

"Sir, all hotels in the city are owned by Mr. Othman and each one of them has a closed room. Please, come back. We got used to you," he called at me.

At the bottom of the staircase, I stood to listen to him, and noticed a strange fear in his

eyes.

"Why is it Othman Al-Fakih all the time?" Why is it this deformed man?" I thought.

I puffed out polluted air. The people in the street seemed burdened with something which could not be seen as if each had a gun pointed at the heart. Unconsciously, I put my hand under the left side of my chest and continued walking.

At night I went looking for a place to stay at. Having walked some distance from the railway, I wished that the train would come. Perhaps, I would jump on to go where it would go. Walking in the streets, I read signboards, film posters at cinemas' fronts, names of oculists, fortune-tellers and Al-Firdaws Hotel whose proprietor is ...

My bag dropped from my hand, when I read: Othman Al-Fakih. I felt his name like a sting. But the darkness and the falling dew made me hurry up. Perhaps, neither the night nor the dew were the motive for this. It could have been my curiosity to find out about the closed rooms.

I was surprised by the darkness of the place. The guests were soundly asleep. In the hotel's manager's room, I found a body wrapped in a quilt and a black blanket with the head in the bed and the feet sticking out revealing a physical defect in the toes. I wanted to awaken him but suddenly a mysterious fear overcame me. I tried to stretch out my hand but I drew it back.

"Sir, Sir," I whispered.

The wrapped body did not move. Its breathing was loud. My fear heightened. "What shall I do?" I said to myself.

I was about to go out of the hotel, when the lying body stirred slowly.

"Sir, Sir," I whispered loudly.

I was taken aback as the wrapped body rose up and stared at me. Hardly had I seen its features than I cried,

"Mr. Othman?"

He closed the door and pulled me by the hand and snored.

"Who are you? What do you want to steal?" Suddenly, he stopped speaking and whispered,

"How did you know my name?"

I did not know the reason for my fear. I stood silent. I was shaken by a kind of horror which I had never experienced before. Othman was grasping my hand, asking repeatedly, "How did you know my name? What do you want to do? How did you open the door?"

I had to answer but he was still holding my hand. I wanted to say something but he roared in the hotel. All the hotel's residents woke up.

"He tried to steal," he said pointing at me.

"I've come here just like any other guest," I cried unconsciously, trying to rid myself of humiliation.

He released my hand as he got assured of the clients who circled me. He clapped his hands and shook his head.

"How did you know my name and how did you guess that I was Othman?"

I cast a look at the bare-footed guests with nightmares still besetting in their eyes.

"I've seen you at Al-Sa'ada Hotel where I stayed at first," I cried. "As for the door, it was open. You perhaps forgot to close it."

I scanned the faces. Othman was just like a frightened rat. His crooked chin spotted by scars. All the rooms were lighted except the Room No.1. I looked around. I found myself the centre of their attention.

"Why have you kept this room closed too?" I shouted.

Othman was startled by what I said. He closed the door behind me, and looked at the residents and pointed with his finger at me.

"What have you got to do with it?"

His tone terrified me. I drew back, opened the door and picked up my bag.

"Get out," he shouted while advancing towards me and pulling my hand. "I don't want to see you here again."

The clouds moving towards the eastern part of the city were laughing like a giant dragging its feet over its head, getting narrow at the head and sometimes at the belly. I kept staring at the grey and black clouds for half an hour until I got drowsy and slept.

I heard screams, sobbing and singing and

saw ghosts, soldiers, my mother and brothers dying. I felt in a deep bottomless well. I remained for days flying non-stop in the well's space. The soldiers were getting ready for a civil war. My father was lying in the middle of the street with blood oozing from his eyes. The well was deeper than all oceans. I went down and down, drawn by the wind. I cried out. I saw a guard holding a lamp over my head. New concerns assailed me.

"What are you up to? Haven't you got a place to sleep in? Get up," said the guard.

"I don't know how I got here and how I slept all this time?"

"Get up. Get up. This is a military zone. If they see you here..."

I kept looking at the guard's face. I could not understand the reason for hating Othman. He threw me at a sea of ill winds which beset my body all this time. "How the hell I came here," I thought recalling the clouds which gathered over my head and how they grew bigger. That was the dream which irritated me. I felt some relief as I got up from my place. The guard was looking at me. I felt as if his eyes were piercing my back some metres away. I turned to him. He was standing still like a stone.

"Why?" I asked myself. "He is only a guard."

From a distance, I heard him while he was moving his body to the left. "I'm looking for a hotel beyond the railway, near the Tribes' Statue."

I was surprised to smell orange blossoms mixed with the smell of the clay. I was overjoyed just like children. I juggled the bag from one hand to another. I had not been familiar with such sweet smell of orange blossoms. I walked on for some distance towards the city centre, talking to myself.

"I haven't minded my business and turned my attention to a closed room which I have nothing to do with. Am I like others? Why should I involve myself in something nobody cares about?"

Again, I smelt the air with orange blossoms scent.

"I should mend my ways and be content like other people with what goes on," I said to myself. "I will not ask, doubt or involve myself in things other than my own business. I should start looking for a job, I might manage to find a good wife, live in a house warmed by satisfaction, love and children."

I raised my eyes to see Al-Masarra Hotel, with the name of its owner Othman Al-Fakih. I inhaled the air deeply seeking the smell of orange blossoms. But this time I failed to sense the smell of any blossoms or clay. The air which greeted my face was moist and saline. It made me sick. The houses surrounding the hotel had lost its loftiness. No sooner had the day broken than the shops opened.

"Are you waiting for anybody, Sir?" a gentle-faced workman asked me.

"No, but why do you ask?" I said in surprise.

"I'm in charge of these shops until nine o'clock. I open them. A friend might come along to ask for certain goods or something else," he replied gently.

"Pardon, I'm looking for a place to stay at. The hotels in the city are..." I said.

I felt like crying out to relieve some of my pain.

"What about the hotels in the city?" the workman whispered.

"They are owned by one man."

"Not only the hotels but also these shops are owned by the same man. He also has a cinema. a posh apartment building. He is the man who pays me for minding these shops, but ..." said it cautiously as if he were revealing a secret.

His voice was coming smooth with a glow of rage and sharp tone.

"Is there a hotel not owned by Othman?" I asked while I was about to leave.

"Don't bother yourself. You have to sleep in gardens and get used to the smell of the damp grass," he answered voicing my despair.

I looked at his eyes. They were crying out inaudibly.

"Thank you. You're the first man I feel at

ease with." I walked to the other side of the city. The shops sent out a scent of hazlenut and poppy. I became permeated with the bacteria of olive, raising and licorice. Then, I looked carefully at the place I reached. I recognized the market place. I read "Al-Fakih Markets" From smells that filled the air around me I gathered that he was dealing in banana, grain and saffron.

It seemed to me that I was boring myself to death. I had to neglect all questions. I had been fed up with this slow death to which I was dragged by this man called Othman.

From the gaps in the cracked ceiling I managed to see a stork which had not migrated yet. I almost lost consciousness whenever I gazed at something I was not familiar with or something I had no interest in before. I could not understand why I raised my hand and shouted in the direction of the stork, "Damn Othman, do you own this bird too?"

The answer was silence, fraught with apprehensions, winds and cockroaches. It seemed to me that I heard someone whisper into my ear. "Shut up, keep silent, keep silent."

The dawn was clear as rain-soaked clouds moved towards the southern part of the city, driving all would-be rain. Suddenly, I felt something like a sting in my limbs. I passed my hand over a large part of my body. Then, I noticed a red spot stretching from my navel to neck. Its colour grew deeper at the chest and lighter at the end of the navel and neck. I was so struck with fear that I almost wept. But something mysterious crossed my mind and made me calm.

"To die, sometimes, is easier than survival." I said to myself. I had another look at the red spot. I comforted that it was eating at me slowly. I almost fell down from panic. But I managed to pull myself together and walked on to the end of the market.

At the city centre, I chose to walk on a dusty side-walk. I had left my bag when I thought that its contents not worthy of two dinars. I read the names of hotels, and I became sure that it was crazy of me to stay in

this city. Nothing could encourage me to stay any longer. I began to think of my family, my father and all those whom I chose to live among throughout a quarter of a century. Unconsciously, I began to weep like a baby as if my soul were parting with my body. Whenever I saw a shop, a hotel, a cinema, a market, a building or a man owned by this Othman Al-Fakih, I burst into tears. I didn't know why. I cried at the top of my voice.

Gradually, I came to lose faith in all that I was aware of as a human being. I said let's face it "a man like me who does not have a thing to call his own should put an end to his life so as not to give through insignificance and poverty an opportunity for people like Othman Al-Fakih."

I stood in silence, my clothes were wet. Unconsciously, I walked towards Al-Sa'ada Hotel as if I reached the end of the trip. I climbed the stairs timidly before I could regain my breath, I found myself face to face with Mr. Al-Fakih who was surprised to see me breathing heavily like a bull after a race. It was strange to see Othman Al-Fakih wearing another face, evading me and drawing his disfigured legs behind the threshold.

"Why have you come back? I hope you haven't forgotten anything?" he asked.

I stared at his face — something I haven't done before. I found in his features a great deal of cunning masked with innocence. This strange mixture further infuriated me.

"You expelled me yesterday and I didn't deserve this," I said.

Don't you know that what you did was against ..." he said in a master's tone.

"I didn't do anything and you know this," I cried.

"What do you want? Your cries cut no ice with me. If you persist, I will do what you don't expect at all."

"Do what you like. I've come to spit in your face," I cried like someone who has seen death.

The hotel's residents gathered around us. Othman would only cease to answer my curses with calmness which I could not believe. Then, he gestured to the guests to

leave as he whispered in my ear.

"You're angry for something I didn't mean. How could you lose your temper that much?"

The room was still abandoned, though it was in the middle of the hotel. I felt it was about time to ask him, when I saw his features and thought that they calmed down.

"I'm sorry," I said with wit. "I slept last night on the pavement and the watchman awakened me. I dreamt of dreadful things and the cold air hurt me. But this is something I wish to forget."

I thought I was about to score a point.

"Don't be angry with me," I said in the same way, "if I asked you about the closed room I find in every hotel I enter. I can't help being curious."

He stared at me carefully and he started to read in his account books. Before he raised his head at me again, he said in a tone which I had not known before,

"When all the guests get out, I will certainly open it for you, to see..." Then he said in a wailing tone, "I'll open it just for you."

I was overjoyed and forgot the hatred I felt towards him and sat by him.

"Believe me, I'll never reveal such a secret to anybody" I said.

"I'm sure of that," he said laughing aloud. "It is a secret which is not easy for anybody to know except for a man like you."

"What do you mean?" I said in surprise.

"When you get into the room, you'll know everything."

The sun crowned the city with haloes of light, breaking at the heads of buildings and shedding warmth over low houses. I spotted birds, women and a train which concealed half of the city from its other half. I could see everything from my hotel's window. I felt the flame within me. I passed my hand over my navel, and then lifted my clothes up. I found that the red spot turned yellow. I guessed that my sorrow and agitation were the cause of the agony I was undergoing. My mere satisfaction at something was enough to ensure my health and my delight. I was wondering about the closed room.

"What secret was stored in it and why Othman closed it and why he did not make use of it. In every hotel owned by Othman there was a closed room, not opened by any guest and not approached by even the managers in charge of the hotels. Why?"

"Come here Sir," I heard him saying. "You will see the room which gave you trouble all the time."

Blood rushed to his face while he was walking calmly towards the room. Before we got to it, he insisted that I should take off my shoes. I did not know the reason.

"Why, Mr. Othman?" I asked.

He turned away his eyes as if he were running away from my doubts.

"The room you are entering..."

I interrupted him with a nod of the head.

"Clean, and perhaps furnished. What else?"

"Take off your shoes to see. You won't lose anything."

I took off my shoes near the door. I saw Othman pulling nails out, glancing from time to time towards me just before pulling the last nail.

He closed the hotel's door. I was watching him all the time then suddenly two men took hold of my hand. I did not know from where they had come.

Quickly, Othman opened the door which had been closed ever since I came. They tied my hands together and gagged my mouth with a piece of cloth smelling like moth balls. They threw me into the room as they were laughing. But their laughter was tinged with bitterness and fear.

"Quickly, quickly," I heard Othman saying.

I was helpless and there was nothing to suggest life. The room was windowless, narrow and damp. I felt an army of ants was moving on my body. To reach the door I wriggled like a worm on a scorched land. I wished that someone curious like me would come to the hotel and ask about the secret of the closed room, in the hope that he would save me from the fatal end to which I came all by myself.

Something was jumping about me. I could guess what insect it was. But slight panic crept into my body. I almost lost my mind when I spotted 'the thing' jump high. Then it started to bite in different places in my body. I did my best to dodge its bites but to no avail.

Thousands of insects were creeping towards me. I imagined that I was taken to pieces in their mouths. I howled like a wolf being killed but I could not hear the echo to my howling. The piece of cloth was teeming and creeping insects as they entered my nose and eyes and sucked my blood. Meanwhile I was howling and moving my limbs with all my might. But it was not long before the smell coming from the piece of cloth permeated my head and even the minutest cell in my body. I could no longer see, hear or sense anything. My eyes remained open. I don't know whether they closed them or not after my death.

Translated by Adnan Salman



Abdul Raheem Al-Wakeel, Monument, Bronze, 30 X 50 cm

May Mudhaffar

Graduated at the English Department, Faculty of Arts, Baghdad 1962.

She is a regular contributor to various Iraqi dailies, weeklies and monthlies, writing mainly on fine arts.

Among her published works:

Steps at Dawn, Short stories, 1970.

The Swans, short stories, 1979.

The Fire Bird, poems, 1985.

May Mudhaffar started to write short stories in the 1960s, a period of experimentation in Iraqi short story. However, the writer tried to find a new way of expression which could bring out her artistic skills. Most of her stories show a blend of romanticism and realism. Her new poems clearly make both her poetic and narrative style closely related to each other.

The Half-Visibles

"Wait, I haven't finished yet."

When we locked the doors and windows and drew the curtains, it was pitch dark. We were not visible to each other nor were our lips, yet the clear and smooth voices were heard. Everything will die out except the never ending flow of voices. Listen, let us go into the earth and delve into this mysterious secret.

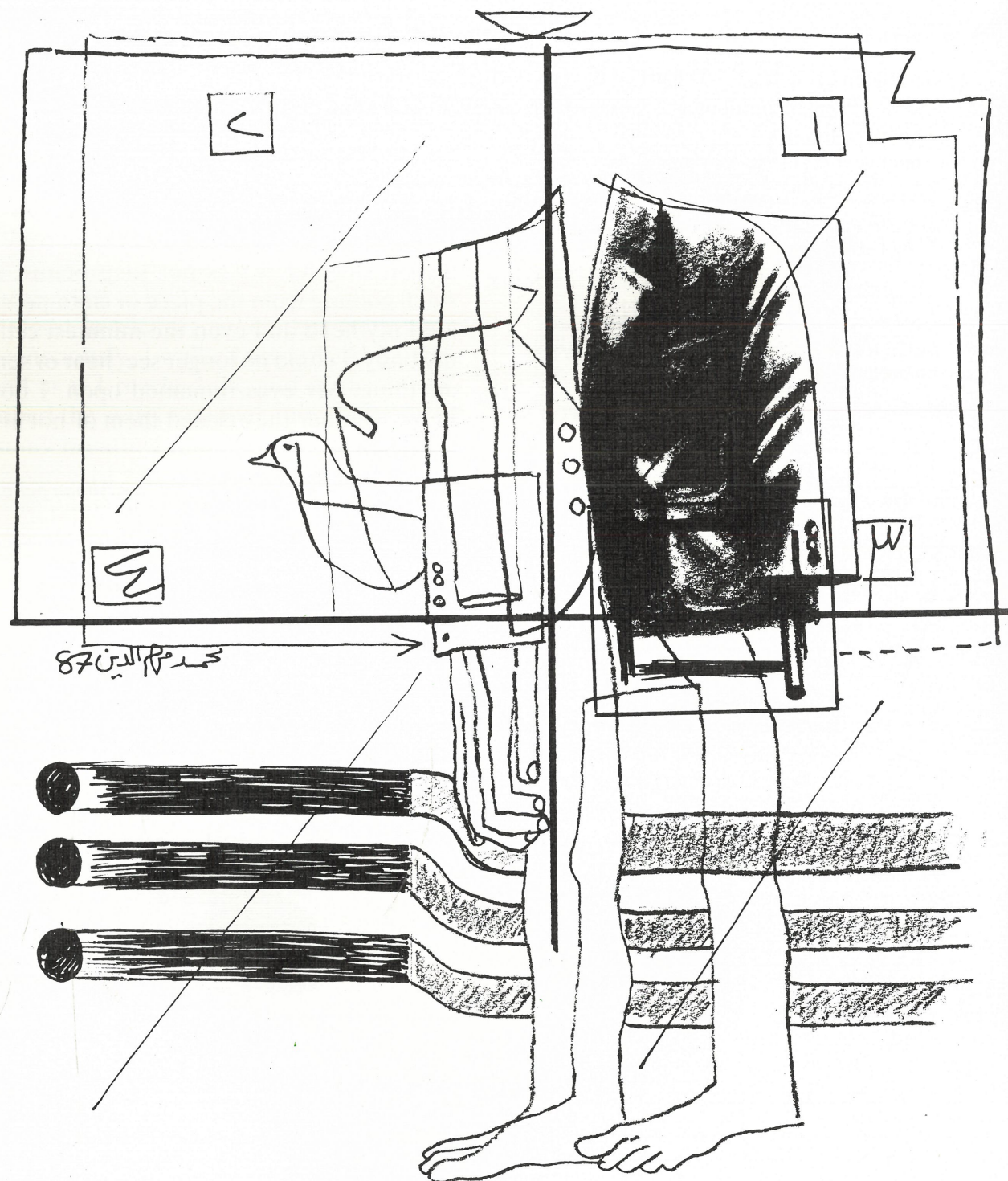
In the old days we were told a story of a woman who lived in a prince's palace. She was free to move about every corner of the palace and was allowed to go into the one hundred rooms of the palace except one. She was very curious to know what was inside that room. We were curious too. We anxiously followed up the story and eagerly hoped that the woman could get hold of the key and find out the secret of that mysterious locked room. Eventually she got the key and entered the room, but, she never came out again and the secret of that room died with her. We hoped she would come back but she

never did. We left the mystery of that room unravelled.

"Wait! I haven't finished the story yet."

Women were dressed in their best and men looked elegant. Ostrich feathers on women's shoulders softly tipped men's glasses. Guests were engrossed in discussions. They were standing in circles. Some looked lonely, others looked puzzled and some even looked peculiar.

Facts of life were discussed. Vulgar jokes were told. More than one man were praised and described with glory and every now and then words like "wonderful! magnificent! splendid!" were heard. Women were busily talking about eggs and rare chickens and the soaring up prices of paintings. One of them gently flicked her cigarette. She adjusted a ring in her finger so that it could be well noticed by others. She glanced furtively at others. Everything around the place looked in harmony except for him, the most peculiar person among those present.



At first, he seemed contented for being there. Occasionally, he would look to the left and right, and pass a smile to people around him. But, he kept away from others.

As it was approaching midnight, he kept looking at his watch. Time was passing very slowly and he was bored. He watched men and women moving about so energetically listened to their non-stop hot discussions, their resonant laughings and then to his silence. "What keeps me apart from everybody else?" he wondered. He watched the people around him. He remembered Mozart who was vexed by a society of mediocrities. In fact, mediocrity, as Salieri his contemporary and rival⁽¹⁾ cried out, aroused his indignation and killed him. He sat down putting his hands together and then tapping one finger with another. Perhaps Mozart had murmured one of his beautiful tunes into his ears. Or perhaps a sad melody echoed in his ears leaving an impression of magic that would pierce into the heads of those sitting on luxurious chairs, with diaphanous clothes and masked faces. "Who are they?" he wondered. He swiftly looked to the left and to the right and then backward. His heart was beating fast. He rubbed his eyes, perhaps what he had seen was a mere illusion. But he looked out again and this time more carefully. He realized that what he had seen was not unreal. People were cut in halves. They were moving around, laughing, talking and holding their glasses, but only half of their bodies were visible. But, where is the other half? How come that a nice-looking woman with shining hair and beautiful eyes was cut into two? And where is the other half of her body? How would a man with big rounded belly change into the shape of a triangle? His wife smiles like "La Gioconda" but, an imbecile la Gioconda. He stood up, rubbed his face with a handkerchief. He rubbed his eyes once again. As he whispered "In the name of Allah..." a woman walked up to him.

"Hello!" she said and began to chat with him.

He was a bit confused. He offered her a cigarette. She took it with her right hand. He

cautiously patted on her cheek as he was lighting the cigarette. He had a glimpse of her glittering eyes and her thick eyelashes. With a bewildered gaze, he watched her putting the cigarette in the visible half of her lips. The other half of her body was invisible; just a complete vacuum.

She talked to him and her voice pierced into his ears. In the end, she got bored and her voice pierced into his ears. In the end, she got bored and left him. He bowed to her with respect. With open curiosity he stared at the faces around him. He could only see half faces. Everybody was divided into two halves; a dark half and a bright half. Women's faces were almost completely deformed. They were left with one eye, half noses and half lips. With the tips of his fingers he felt his face and made sure that it was still there. For a while, he was relieved. However, he wanted to be absolutely sure that his face was still there. He searched for a mirror, but could not find one. He searched in the sitting room, the entrance hall, and one of the main rooms. It was quite amazing not to find a single mirror in the house knowing that his host was obsessed with her appearance.

He knew the lady of the house. She was a fashionable, elegant woman and surely she must have mirrors almost in every corner of her house. He looked for the lady of the house, but he could not find her. He became more inquisitive. He walked up and down the hall as though he was searching for somebody or something.

Things began to get worse. Some people had almost a less-than-half face; and in some cases a quarter of a face. There was a fat man with protruding teeth who preoccupied him while he continued laughing and devouring nuts. Now, only half of his face could be seen. He could neither find a mirror nor the lady of the house. Perhaps she was in the kitchen seeing to it that dinner was being properly prepared. He looked at his watch. It was almost midnight. He wondered whether people began to be half visible because they were exhausted or it probably was

a modern phenomenon that has emerged overnight.

He felt his face again. He wanted to be sure that it was still there. He had a glance at all the faces around him. He wished he would have had some kind of relationship with one of those people. Then, he would have had the courage to ask about his or her missing half!

Suddenly, he felt a tap on his shoulders. He turned back and saw his host, known for his distinguished sociability. He was shocked to see that his host was entirely faceless. His features had completely gone. The face looked like a dark shadow with black hair streaked with white. His voice faltered as he tried to speak. "Are you all right, sir?" he asked his host as he pulled himself together. "Is there something wrong?" he asked with a look of surprise. "No, but..." he muttered. He thought for a while, if he told him the truth he might frighten him to death. "No... No. I thought you were tired and that's all" he said as he wanted to touch the dark shadow on the man's face. But, his hand touched nothing because there was nothing to touch. He panicked. It was not an illusion. The man's face was not there!

His host was indeed annoyed. He rushed inside and disappeared for a while, but he came out again rising his head like a peacock, turning his head to the other side and snapping his fingers; something he used to do wherever he got furious.

Undoubtedly, the host went inside to check his face. Then, an idea came to him. Why doesn't he look for a mirror in the lavatory. It was well furnished, an elegant sink, a set of towels; fragrant soap; eau de cologne and colourful handkerchiefs. But, he could see no mirrors. There was a nail which meant that a mirror was once hung there. He wondered if the whole thing was a premeditated conspiracy. He got a bit scary. Perhaps it was something wrong with him after all. He held his head with his hands. Was it the drink he just had? He did not know. He went down to his car. With trembling fingers he opened the door. His heart was beating fast. He

turned on the inside lights and looked into the rear-view mirror. This time he could see his face. It was a bit of relief. Yet he was not satisfied. He preferred to go back to the party. Perhaps things have changed while he was out.

Back inside, he could tell that nobody had noticed his absence. His host was talking to a woman whom he never noticed before. She had a pretty face with fine "visible" features. She seemed different from the rest of the women who were wearing a great deal of make up. He wondered "why he had not noticed her before." Perhaps it was because of the heavy smoke and the crowd in the hall. She was talking with a serene smile on her face. Next to her, he saw another woman boisterously talking, laughing, moving her hands and stamping her feet on the floor. She was about to poke her fingers into her companion's eyes who was just like her, with half-visible figure.

He decided to walk up to that beautiful woman hoping to get an explanation of this mysterious phenomenon. He stood close to her. His host looked shocked when he saw him, as if he had seen a ghost. He pulled a chair and said "would you mind if I join you?" "Please do," his host replied reluctantly. "It's a pleasure" the woman said with a soft voice. He examined her 'whole' face. Then he glanced at his host's invisible face. It was obvious that what he had seen was not an illusion. Aprologetically their host left them together.

"I've noticed a strange phenomenon in this hall. Do you see anything unusual on the faces?" he whispered into her ears.

"Nothing unusual. Nothing at all," she replied.

"Do you see them with full figures and faces?"

"Full? What do you mean?" He moved closer to her that she had to move her face away.

"Our host, for instance, have you noticed his features?" he asked quietly. "Certainly I have. What's unusual about them?"

"Does he really have a face?" he asked

with a persistent tone. "Hey! What's this? Are you joking?" She exclaimed laughingly. "You see, I see only half of the people around and sometimes only a quarter of them" he said.

"Are you sure you are not drunk?"

"I don't drink liquor" he firmly replied.

"Perhaps you've had something else! Do excuse my frankness, but your remarks mean that you..." She did not continue. He had to give up. It was obvious that she could not see what he was seeing. But how could he make her understand. He had to change the subject, otherwise she would think he was mad.

"You said you often meet with those people?"

"Quite frequently" she replied.

"And you've been here before?"

"Several times"

"I was looking for a mirror, but I could not find one"

She looked at him with greater astonishment.

"Yes, a mirror, so I could see my face." he said emphatically.

"You couldn't find one, could you?" she exclaimed.

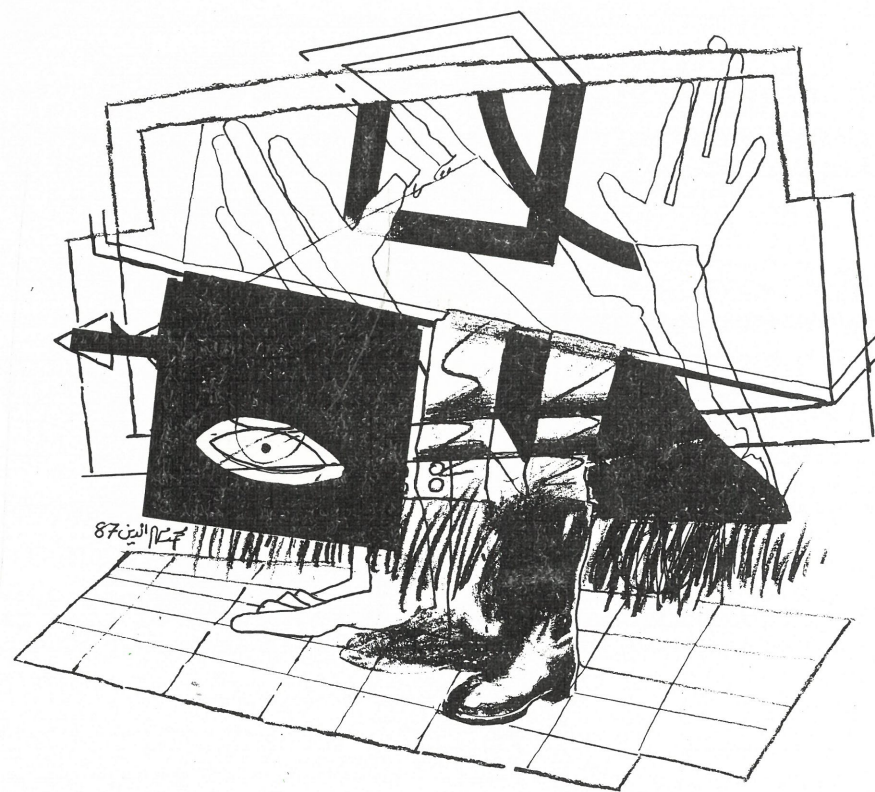
"No. I looked in the corridors, in all the rooms and even in the toilets. Not a single one, but there was a trace of a mirror."

"If you are looking for one, I can lend you mine, a small one though." she said.

"No. I don't need it now. It's over now. I needed one a while ago, but not any more. Now... it's all over." He kept repeating "It's over... over... over..." He stood up and corrected his posture muttering: "No. No. I Don't want it... it's over... it's over. I've seen a lot. I've seen what could not be seen."

Translated by: Afaf I. Ali

(1) Reference to Amadeus, a play, by Peter Shaffer.



Dramatic Structure in Modern Poetry

A Study on War Poem

Ali Ja'far al-Allaq, Ph.D.

After it has become drawn out, the Iraq-Iran war is no longer a mere border conflict or clashes between military forces. It has gone so deep as to affect all walks of life and splash everything with blood and shrapnels. The Iraqi poets have viewed this war from different perspectives and have dealt with it from different points of contact. So, the poets' ways of expression in this concern are varied and diverse. You may find the dramatic tendency occupying a great space within a poet's production or that of a group of poets. You may also notice, at the same time, a reflective tendency which distinguishes one poet from another.

There is no doubt that the Iraqi poets have given a real expression of the experience of the war in their works. Many of them have undergone battles, fright and adventures. Shrapnels, blood and bruises have left their marks on their spirits, tones and features. It is a matter of course for the poets to find themselves profoundly and closely attached to their country since the war would threaten their culture, language and heritage.

The main thrust of this study is to indicate the development of an event or idea, areas of dramatic tension and how the poet manages to make use of the sentimental and mental potentials in it. The attention given by such Iraqi poets as Yousif al-Sayigh, Hameed Said, Sami Mehdi and Yassin Taha Hafidh to dramatic poetic expression is the main reason why they are chosen for consideration.

Yousif al-Sayigh has a great capability to embody his ideas and apprehensions and give them effective perceptible forms. In his poem, *Mistress of Marshes*, he gives a dramatic picture which many elements collaborate to make, showing remarkable skill and shrewdness. But, this cannot be easily seen on the surface because Al-Sayigh is clever in concealing his art.

The different voices raised in his poem have a great

part to play in building and developing a dramatic event. Those voices contribute to the intensification of the dramatic flow in the poem and give it shape to bring about the most possible influence.

Al-Sayigh's poems, particularly the long ones, are marked by disparity in tone and performance. His tone can grow so faint that it becomes a sweet whisper or grow so high that it becomes direct rhetoric. He can diversify poetic metres and rhythms so cleverly and sometimes he inclines to prose or something like prose. He also makes use of the classical poetic formula whenever he finds this help produce good performance. A dialogue, monologue, inner dialogue, dream, memory, film scene and drawing represent means of profound effect in giving his poem a dramatic form.

Now, we shall go through Al-Sayigh's poem, *Mistress of Marshes*, which is a good example of a modern poem with a dramatic structure.

*In the blood of a woman,
From the people of marshes,
I dipped my hand..
I shall draw a lady,
A symbol of triumphant Iraq
May you suggest its eyes' gleam of light
And add to it a laugh of two children.*

The lady and the two children are two elements in the dramatic development of the poem. The character of the poet or the narrator represents an important point of support in this poem. He plays a decisive role in imaging the event, in connecting the dramatic moves with each other and in developing the context.

The poet, through the character of the narrator, begins his poem with a hypothetical scene or a scene in which he re-draws an actual event. He draws this scene with the blood of a murdered woman. He calls on others to add some details to complete this dramatic scene.

It is interesting to notice that the role of the narra-

tor in this poem is much like his role in the dramatic performance on the stage. We see Al-Sayigh creating a dynamic dramatic atmosphere by making couple between poetry and drawing. Let us reflect upon the complement of the opening scene.

*And light up ten moons
Shortly, Mistress of Marshes will come
Floating, like a candle on water
Carrying red loaves in her right hand
And fruit of fire in her left hand*

The narrator is still asking the audience to participate in completing the scene and adding the touches needed. The poet-narrator has already completed the painting and is ready to break its framework and get it moving on the ground. Now he begins to imagine the event:

*After a while, the wind will blow
And breathe into these still reeds
An echo of a reed pipe,
Will float on the water
After sunset, repeating:
"Tiswahn ... Tiswahn ..."
Silence prevails afterwards
Some moments later,
Echo of bullets is heard.*

Then, the poet completes the execution of the painting but only to release it afterwards:

*Who is more beautiful than you, tonight,
Mistress of the Two Rivers?
In your blood, I dip the edge of sword,
Draw a lady
On the wall of the house.
Draw two children and ten moons
Draw this secure country
And relate the tale of "Tiswahn"
To the children.*

Now, the development is not confined to the event. The narrator himself is subjected to a growth some kind. In the opening scene, he was unarmed, carrying nothing to defend himself. In this scene, he is carrying a sword and is confident of his power. He draws the picture of the lady, the two children, the ten moons and the secure country. He relates to the children the story of this strange lady "Tiswahn". At the beginning, the poet used the past tense (dipped). But in this scene, he used the present tense (dip). This change of tense has its own indication. The past tense embodies something which the poet had no relation with. "With the blood of a woman," an unknown woman. Who is she? From the people of marshes. That scene does not show any affinity or intimacy. While the present tense expresses an intimate relation based on interaction and participation. The woman is no longer an un-

known person.

The poet also makes use of the part played by the chorus. He ensured for his poem an undulation in the levels of performance and a variety of psychological and rhythmic atmospheres. The chorus perform part of this task. As we see in this piece:

*I see a group of girls,
Chanting on the Feast eve
Rejoice, palm leaves
The girls of the marsh have come to you
Dancing since morning has got them tired
And now it is your turn to dance.*

Al-Sayigh has used the elements of nature to a great extent in order to build up for the event and its development. The movement of winds, rain, night has played a significant part in deepening the dramatic event and serving its psychological transitions. Take for example the poet's employment of the element of wind:

*After a while
The wind will blow
And breathe in these still reeds.*

Here there is a co-relation between the reeds and singing, between them and music and between them and human feelings. The reeds are still, maybe because something is going to happen.

The next part gives a different picture of this co-relation between the wind and the reeds.

*After a while
The wind will blow
And breathe in these slaughtered reeds.*

The picture seems as if it were covered with hot blood and the snort of cut-off throats. The blood of reeds permeates the wind, and its sad and hot splash covers everything.

In the last move, the poet uses the movement of wind in the following form:

*Gradually,
The wind heart calms down
And I kindle this lamp
And go to tell one killed from another.*

After the crime was committed and the brave lady was killed, the wind moves another way. The wind heart calms down now. The scene of death looks more tragic and complicated and it becomes difficult to distinguish one killed person from another.

When Al-Sayigh concludes his poem, he makes use of the opening piece of verse after introducing some changes which reflect the development of the event in its last acme:

*Tiswahn ... Tiswahn
Comes every spring
As a votive candle*



Hameed Sa'eed

*Floating on water
Carrying in her right hand red loaves
And in her left hand laurel boughs.*

Mistress of Marshes is one of the most notable and exciting war poems for the wonderful mixture it includes associating man with land and death with birth.

In Hameed Sa'id's poetry, the protagonist is usually beset by a past and present: a present that incites him to fight and a past that urges him to be up to the challenge of his time. To venture history rather than venturing the life of a character and to face a maze rather than facing death is the essence of drama experienced by Hameed Sa'id's heroes.

However, the poet, sometimes, builds his poem, not on a certain individual, but on a combination of elements which together create a state of tension to serve the development of the event and enriches the poem.

The poem chosen for consideration in this study includes interesting inner vitality and development.

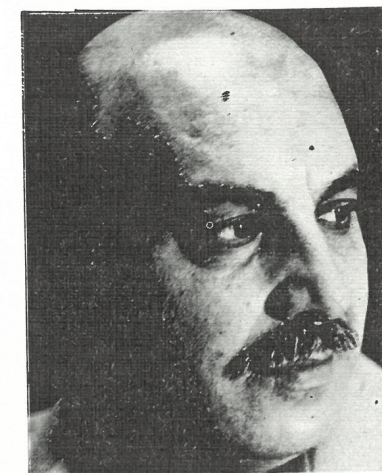
Unlike most of the poet's poems, *A Basri Morning* begins with a close scene wrapped in confusion and insecurity.

*Worried birds, taking shelter
In sudden flight up*

This scene reveals overwhelming anxiety. The birds are haunted by fear resulting from their long experience in the place: thunder of bombing, collapse of buildings, bomb shrapnels, cries of help.

In the following part, the poet attempts to complete the scene with other details which remain inadequate because the poet cannot control the visible things before him for their constant motion or their being capable of further additions.

A lady and three pupils



Sami Mehdi

*No, another one appears
I wanted to make sure of details
But since the distance is far away
No, no, it is not far away...
I'm tired and glad.*

So, the atmosphere is still permeated with feelings of anxiety. Its elements are incomplete. It is still developing. Let us see the following part:

*I've come closer to the balcony
A luxurious room and very fine hotel
A Mauritanian poet accompanied by a Mauritanian poet
They must look for a rhyme
A high date-palm
Al-Sayyab's statue rises as high as the palm*

Unlike the previous piece, this one shows stability and harmony. The poet, now, is sure of the things he sees: The balcony, hotel and the two poets, which add to the scene a touch of merriment and gentleness. There is some sort of association between the elements of the scene as if each of which calls for the other. While the two poets are looking for a rhyme, Al-Sayyab's statue looks as if it were singing and sending out roses. The following piece includes a combination of opposite things:

*Peevish birds ... gentle birds
Splendid poems and ... poems
Artillery thunder is a tattoo mark on
the silence page
Basra is a tattoo mark on my language*

This combination of opposites reveals basic things: clarity and renewal.

*Coloured birds and a familiar sky
On the horizon of children's blood*

*There is a blessed country
Opening its doors for singing
A woman of light
Which we take as our guide*

This piece is dominated by a clear intimacy, softness and smooth tone.

There is no doubt that *Basri Morning* is a poem for peace and war together.

Unlike the poems of the poets of his generation, Sami Mehdi's poems are characterized by sweet and fluent simplicity but this simplicity is only superficial. When we reflect upon it, we find a calm, covert meaning which is profound. Between the superficial simplicity and the inner profound and dynamic meaning lies the true drama in the poems of Sami Mehdi.

Sami Mehdi's poem *Clear Sky* distinctively reveals many of the elements of the dramatic structure found in his poetic works. The poem provides some sort of inner antithesis which cannot be easily discovered.

*Burnt grass,
Space choked with bombing smoke
And wounded soldiers
Who should make some muffled groaning*

This piece of verse shows that the battle has just finished. The poem itself seems as if it were coming from among rubble and torn off limbs of dead soldiers.

Obviously, there is no verb in this piece, no motion of a soldier, vehicle or plane, which deepens the feeling that the battle is over. The scene as a whole embodies the destruction left on land, in the spirit and on the horizon.

In the second piece, there is some sort of movement but it only gives depth to silence and toughness prevailing in the previous scene.

*But my comrade's asking me:
If I've seen another sky without clouds
He didn't give me time to answer him
"Look" he said,
"Which sky is more brilliant
Or which stars?"*

Human shade spreads into the picture, sending warmth of very special kind. The word 'but' indicate two opposite atmospheres in the scene. There are two comrades in one trench, facing the same sky and the same fate.

The soldier who asked the question did not wait for his comrade to answer it. Perhaps, he did not want to bother his comrade with the answer. He could be wounded or exhausted after a battle whose smoke is still covering the area. Or, he did not want to distract the attention of his comrade from keeping vigilant against any possible danger. Or he felt that there is no justification for his question at the circumstances they experience. However, this reflects a spontaneous human manner.

It is interesting to notice that the poet's comrade asks the poet: if he has seen another sky without clouds. The word "another" has an important meaning here. He did not ask the poet whether he had seen a sky, any sky, without clouds, but if he had seen "another" sky, other than this one which is covering them. The gloomy space and night which started to cover everything did not stop the fighter from exclaiming surprisingly:

*Which sky is more brilliant
Or which stars?*

There is no doubt that the burnt grass and the groaning of the wounded are a costly price. But this is something inevitable. In any case, there is nothing that will remain for ever except this sky which all these losses are made in defence of it.

The poem reaches its climax in the last section. It is a climax which usually conceals superficial calm and vitality that calls for reflection:

*My comrade is taking a handful
Of the shelter sand
And throwing it round me,
And then he stands up.*

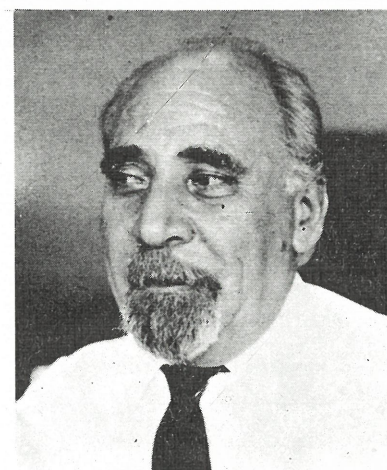
What explanation we can give to such behaviour? Doesn't the handful of sand refer to their association with the shelter? Can we consider the handful of sand as a material tie which brought them out of their reflections and questions to the warmth of the sand?

Throughout the poem, we find this fighter a positive man who asks, reflects upon things, gives answers and wonders. We also find a series of actions: takes a handful of the shelter sand, throws it round his comrade, and then stands up. Doesn't this mean that this fighter is still maintaining his courage? This might reflect his readiness for any eventualities: he and his comrade are part of this place, part of its honour and both of them are capable of honourable death or honourable life.

It seems that Yassin Taha Hafidh is indifferent to the glittering and bright surfaces of things. He is always haunted by fear of what is hidden and transient and of what is stored by memory. He always tries to see the thesis and its antithesis.

Most of Hafidh's poems show us that he has a dramatic sense and tries to infuse dynamism in stagnant things and to find the other side of the idea which he wants to express, that is to say its opposite side which increases its intensity and depth in mind and in soul

His poem *Guard-Post I* presents us with a good example of Hafidh's way of giving expression to the dramatic experience in verse. The poem does not have many elements of struggle. The basic dynamic elements in the poem are two: The river and the young guard. They sometime come together and sometime part with each other. The poem begins with



Yousif Al-Sayigh

the following scene:

*The water takes a rest,
Revealing to darkness its time,
And an old joy,
Passing through the alert memory,
Revealing charm and desire,
Capturing the fancy of the young guard.*

This relaxing scene conceals utmost tension. It is the tension of the vigilant soldier who is facing the enemy, darkness and exhaustion. The water plays a serious part in inducing an atmosphere of relaxation in the nature. The river threatens the tension of the guard with this relaxation. The words and verbs used by the poet provoke the virility of the guard, arouse his desire and a feeling of loneliness. Water, in this scene, is not merely one of the elements of nature. It is much more than that. It dominates the scene. It is a living creature that takes rest, reveals things, captures the fancy and is associated with joy, charm, desire, fancy and night. The whole scene is fraught with life, eroticism and brilliance: the nature poses in the nude before a young guard, standing with tension to face his desires and possible death, which permeate the air and darkness.

So, death and life are the two elements of this scene. But the possibility of life is seen predominant over that of death. What should the guard do then? Which call should he listen to? To the call of death or to that of life?

Here is the water

*It captures the fancy of the young guard:
Walks as it would like to walk
Joyfully, joyfully
The young guard slips into glittering happiness
His helmet slips with the green army jacket
The loaded machine-gun stumbles!
The step mixes with a cry.*

Finally, the young guard gives in to the water temp-



Yassin Taha Hafidh

tations: the call of life, desire and nature. He seeks happiness. It is interesting to notice that the poet uses the verb "slip" to express the response of the soldier to the call of water. So, the matter is no more than a lapse into happiness and not a legitimate attempt. This is because it is a dangerous moment of relaxation to which the guard gives in. The happiness into which the soldier lapses is a "glittering one" So, it is dangerous.

This is because the adjective "glittering" would make of the soldier, during his night watch, a target exposed to the enemy. The verbs used in the last part of this piece show embarrassment and off-balance. The mixture of 'the step and the cry' gives a red light to the young guard. His confused voice puts an end to his sweet relaxation. Thus, the poet paves the way for the final part of the poem:

*The water takes a rest,
The young guard is vigilant,
At the guard-post,
He's still standing,
Looking amid the wind.*

Clearly, the scene is still. The water 'takes a rest', the guard is still 'standing'. What calls attention in this part is that the guard is given a space equal to that of water. While in the previous parts, the water is given the biggest space. He became an active element. For the first time, the poet describes the guard as vigilant and refers to the place at which he must stand, that is the guard-post.

Everything has become clear: overriding watchfulness and exceptional readiness for all eventualities. As we have mentioned before, the scene is free of direct verbs of movement but it is fraught with covert, inner vitality. This is evident from the soldier's vigilance, his noble weariness in his stand in the face of night, danger, memory and from his sharp look into the wind.

Translated by Adnan Salman

The Emergence and Development of Iraqi Story

Abdul Ilah Ahmad , Ph.D.

Modern story as it is known in the West was first introduced into Arab literature in the last third of the 19th century as a result of contacts between the Arab world and Europe. Egypt, Greater Syria especially Lebanon were the first Arab countries which witnessed a number of pioneering attempts in story writing. Though discussing the reasons of such a development is beyond the scope of this study, one factor which needs to be highlighted is the geographical situation of these two countries overlooking the Mediterranean. This factor facilitated contacts and strengthened ties between these countries and Europe within a relatively short period. The emergence and development of various types of modern prose such as essays, plays and modern stories was an outcome of such contacts.

Iraq, on the other hand, hampered by certain historical circumstances and confined because of the distance separating it from the Mediterranean was deprived for a long time of any similar contacts. Therefore modern story writing was introduced in Iraq only in the beginning of the 20th century and precisely after 1908 in which the Ottoman constitution was enacted following the coup against Sultan Abdul Hameed by the Unity and Progress Society.

It is true that many reformist attempts were initiated by some Ottoman Walis in the course of the 19th century which can be considered as the beginning of modern progress in Iraq.⁽¹⁾ These reforms, however, did not change greatly the political, social and cultural life in Iraq, so that modern literature such as story writing can be introduced.

These reforms had only minimal effects on literature in Iraq and therefore they could be considered as the beginning of story writing later in 1908. The reason for that is the appearance of a number of educated people who were influenced by western civilisation and culture. In the forefront of them were those

in contact with the missionaries who first came to Iraq in the 17th century and set up their own schools. Some members of these missionaries were engaged in scientific and literary activities based on western civilisation and followed its course. Among such people was a man who tried to present a play in the late 19th century⁽²⁾. Another outcome was the development of the language of prose. It became subtler and more able to express various issue of life after getting rid of rhyme and metaphor and more inclined to fluency in style. This development in prose was essential before literature in Iraq could communicate with modern literary genres and enable the writers to write modern stories.

After the proclamation of the Ottoman constitution in 1908 there was a huge increase in the number of papers and magazines in Iraq.⁽³⁾

These papers and magazines started publishing what can be called the early attempts in story writing in Iraq. A significant characteristic of these stories was the distinct pattern they followed in comparison to the patterns prevailing then in other parts of the Arab world and especially in Egypt. This common pattern took the form of adventure novels and love stories, the main plot of which being a love affair between two idealist protagonists. The relationship would be hampered in most cases by various obstacles and would end eventually in reunion. This was the traditional plot of most of the Arab popular stories in that period and characterized the majority of western novels translated then.⁽⁴⁾ It is a social trend aimed at dealing with one aspect of the social and reformist articles written in that period abundantly. Therefore these stories can be considered as an extension to or even a different kind of such articles with the same educational tone which borrowed the form of story as its framework.

This primitive pattern in story-writing which was very close to writing social and reformist articles took a definite artistic form which left its clear marks on the stories written in this period. Based on their specific form one can call such stories as "dream stories" All the stories written in that period with the exception of only one were as short as an article and they were narrated by the writer through a dream and aiming at foreseeing Iraq's future which looked grim at that time. The writer then would move to suggesting solutions which he believed would reawaken the country and pull it out of its backwardness and bring it to the level he wished it would reach after all the setbacks and tragedies it underwent throughout centuries.

The papers and magazines in that period used to call these primitive types of stories as "novels" because of the novelty of that term concerning the writers and men of letters. The term "novel" was used to indicate the novel in its modern meaning, the play and all types of stories and tales.

After the proclamation of the Ottoman constitution and the great intellectual change which it brought about most Iraqi intellectuals were saddened to find their country in ruins despite its deep-rooted civilisation and glorious past. Therefore they resorted to this form of writing to express their thoughts, feelings and contemplations. They tried to see the causes of this backwardness to draw the course which Iraq should follow to restore its past glory. Thus it was unconceivable to write stories of adventure and love fantasies for the sake of entertainment. There was an urgent need to exert all efforts to rebuild the country. Therefore most writers in those days resorted to dreams and visions as a means of expressing their thoughts.

Another reason was that the general public believed in dreams and usually interpreted them to disclose the secrets of the future. The Iraqis in general were in dire need then to know about the future of their country especially because their country was suffering of backwardness and under foreign domination. This need became more acute as a result of the policy of Turkification of the Arabs which was adopted by the Turkish leaders after the constitution and the persecution of the opponents of such a policy. The Arabs resorted to their glorious past to withstand this crushing current. This was followed by the decision the Turkish leaders took to force the Arabs and other peoples to fight in the First World War unprepared and the consequent British domination on the country after fierce battles.

In adopting this form, the Iraqi story-writers were partly influenced by the modern Turkish literature after Iraqi poet Ma'rouf Al-Risafi translated from Turkish "The Novel of Dream" by Namiq Kamal in 1909. Another source of influence came from Arab literature when Mohammed Al-Muwailehi wrote a novel entitled "The Speech of Issa Bin Hisham" in 1905.

The writer gave the impression that his protagonist was telling events he saw in his dream.

In addition to that writers usually use figurative speech in their writings in times of tyranny and oppression. Therefore they make their criticism appear as if it was happening in a world of dreams. Moreover they resort also to the use of symbols instead of expressing their feelings directly.

The stories which adopted the use of dreams as a means of expressing views appeared in the period from 1909 to 1921. Through following up the events depicted in such stories the reader can form a clear picture of the developments which took place in the language of writing during this period, in the style of narration and in the nature of the general attitude towards such stories. Let us look at the first such attempts which was published in a magazine called *Tanweer al-Afkar* (Enlightenment of Thoughts) and carried the title "Dream of Arabia."⁽⁵⁾ This so called story was rhetoric, heavy rhymed and dealt with political issues in a direct way. It was closer to a social and political article than a story. The only thing which could distinguish it from an article was the maginary framework in which it was presented.

In later attempts, on the other hand, such as those stories written by Ata Ameen one can find some artistic elements of the story as a genre. The oratory language and rhymed prose disappear to make room for story expressions and smooth structure.⁽⁶⁾ It is also noticeable that Ata Ameen describes his "How Iraq Prospers" in the footnote as a story and signs his name under the story writer. This move was taken up by the editor of *Iraq* newspaper when he introduced another dream story called "Pause Over the River Diyala" as a meaningful story. The importance of this two references lies in the fact that this was the first time the term "story" was used to describe such works while earlier the term "novel" was wrongly used to refer to literary works of this nature.

Another important remark in this respect is that most of these "dream" stories took a clear political stance towards the events which Iraq witnessed during that period. Therefore some writers adopted the use of symbols when they opposed the ruling Ottoman authorities. Others expressed their feelings of concern and fear towards the future of Iraq which looked bleak. These genuine patriotic feelings which were common among Iraqi intellectuals in that period prompted one of them to write a touching story with lasting impact as it is the case with any genuine literary work.

Thus one can find an optimistic political viewpoint in the first of such stories which was published in 1909 under the title "Dream of Arabia" The writer called in this sotry for the unity of the Moslem Arabs and Turks under the banner of the Ottoman state. This was a characteristic prevailing among some Arab in-

tellecuals as a result of the proclamation of the Ottoman constitution.

However there was a different view in the second "dream" story which was published four years later in 1913 under the title "A Literary Dream."⁷ This literary work was an expression of the feelings of frustration and disappointment which people had after the change in Turkish policy and the adoption of a policy of discrimination by the Turkish rulers towards the non-Turk minorities in the Ottoman state and the subsequent terror and oppression that followed. For these reasons, the writer used simple and clear symbols to express his feelings and opinions and as a means of avoiding retribution. It is natural therefore to see a change in the stance taken by Iraqi intellectuals towards the Ottoman state as expressed in stories written in that period. The clear call for independence and the patriotic trend in their writings were an expression of their worries and concern about the future of Iraq and their quest to find the ways which could achieve its progress.

In another dream story called "Money Rules" by an anonymous writer published in 1914 the writer finds himself in an advanced and prosperous country which he has not seen its like in reality. When he finds himself in front of the ruler of that country, he asks him "what makes a country prosperous and increases its production and wealth?" After listening to the Sultan's advice and instructions the writer concludes his dream with tear-filled eyes asking God for mercy and compassion and saying: "Your mercy, God, I beg You to be kind with Your believers and provide them with men of will and wisdom to see things as they are and foresee the consequences so that the bird of prosperity returns to us and spreads its wings over all the people. You are the Merciful, the Compassionate."

In the most beautiful dream stories entitled "How Iraq Prospers" by Ata Ameen published in 1919 the writer-narrator takes the reader in a journey around a prosperous country which we later discover to be the ancient Iraqi city of Babylon. Startled by the progress of this country the writer says: "I wish my country in the twentieth century A.D. was as prosperous as it was in the third century B.C." And when he meets the preacher of the temple he asks him about the destiny of his beloved city Baghdad and whether it would revive after its death and prosper after its decay."

Many important events took place after the publication of this story on the top of which was the British occupation of Baghdad and their full domination over Iraq. These events prompted fierce resistance against the occupation forces which was culminated in the 1920 Revolution. As a result a deep sense of identity developed among many Iraqi intellectuals about country's independence and its ties with the Arab world. On the other hand efforts were exerted continuously to prepare the ground for crowning Prince Faisal who was chosen by the British as a

monarch in Iraq.⁽⁹⁾

In the light of this background one can understand the meaning and symbols of a story entitled "Journey of Thought" which talked about "The Great Saviour" who will come and save "The Free Lady." It describes the warm welcome he received from the public as an expression of their joy and happiness and their praise for his bravery and chivalry in saving the girl. At the end of the story the narrator wakes up in the light of the dawn which began to disperse darkness.

In another dream-story called "Pause Over the River Diyala and a Talk with Venus" one can understand the symbol of the "girl" who has been longing for so long to meet her lover "The Arab Cavalier" There is a rivalry between him and strangers to win her and now we find him standing on the other side of the river weeping and trying to find a way to reach his sweetheart and to save her. One can also understand why the narrator at the end of the story begs Venus, the goddess of love to help him get his sweetheart back as she would bring happiness back to him. Venus promises him to do so.⁽¹⁰⁾

Any consideration of the contexts of these dream-stories would reveal the naivety of their writers and the haziness of their political ambition which is fraught with emotions. This is due of course to their genuine patriotic feelings which were rekindled by country's volatile circumstances in that period. Moreover the solutions they suggest for the country's problems and the oversimplification and generalization which they imply are a sign that the Iraqi way of thinking in that period was characterised by scratching the surface only without penetrating deep in reality or even understanding it. Iraqi writers then were amazed by the progress they saw in the west in various fields without realizing the nature of the contradictions which western societies were facing because of this progress and that it was not the only way to achieve social progress. They believed firmly that the only way for Iraq to achieve progress was to follow this path.

For example in the story entitled "Money Rules" when asked by the story teller what makes a country prosperous and advanced the Sultan of the prosperous country says, "There are many factors to achieve this aim and they include: firstly providing funds and managing the means of living, secondly organizing irrigation and improving agriculture and expanding trade, thirdly dissemination of sciences among all the people as they form the basis of industry which is the main generator of wealth and finally spreading genuine literature and good values and fighting corruption."

Also in the story entitled "Means of Progress for Iraq" the monk of the temple mentions the following means for Baghdad to achieve progress and resurrection after its death. He says, "Listen my son, in this box there are seeds which were blessed by gods. Here

is a vessel containing the water of the temples and here are pieces of clothes containing the earth of the temples' corridors and here is an instrument that commands the moving of ships and boats and here is a book containing the sciences of the forerunners and the followers. Take them and present them to the people of our country and tell them: "This is your remedy."

Thus the means by which Iraq can prosper as seen by the monk are developing agriculture as symbolized by seeds, water and earth, and industry which he symbolized by the instrument which commands the movement of ships and boats and the dissemination of knowledge and sciences which he symbolized by the book which encompasses the sciences of the past and the present. But how could this be achieved? There is mention of that.

These early attempts in story-writing in Iraq were not confined to what can be termed as dream-stories. One of the prominent writers of such stories wrote two stories in which he left the area of dreams and dealt with life directly. These two stories are: "A Chapter from the Novel of Life" and "The End of Life."¹¹ As it is evident from the titles of these two stories the writer is very pessimistic and underlines his pessimism in many instances. The morale of these two stories is that life is short and transitory. Therefore one must hasten to leave good reputation after him based on good and fruitful deeds. Also one should not be led by his fantasies which do not conform with real life. To explain his views the writer chooses his protagonist from among the youths who under the influence of new books feel alien in their own country. Influenced by his fantasies he believes he has super natural powers and that his desolate society is the real obstacle in his way. Thus he decides to leave for a country where he can utilize his ability and superiority. He goes to the west where he experiences disappointment and eventually falls ill and mourns himself far from his folks and friends.

In his second story the writer chooses an eighteen-year old girl as his protagonist and through a dialogue between the girl and her elder sister the writer expresses his pessimistic views. Life will end to nihilism. They live among a people who do not value their intellectuals. To underline this reality a brother of the two girls is sent to war where he gets killed, thus adding to their grievance.

The reason behind this pessimistic trend adopted by the writer is a psychological reaction to the events taking place in Iraq in those days such as the huge number of losses in the battles which took place after the British occupation of Iraq and the acts of revenge committed by the Turks while retreating from Iraq. The other reason was Iraq's weakness and backwardness especially when viewed by the new breed of intellectuals who were affected by the modern culture

which started to spread in Iraq. The logical outcome of such a frustrating view was more pessimism and a deep feeling in the sterility of life for the sensitive young people who could not compromise between their aspirations and values and between the bleak reality of life.

The importance of these two stories lies in the fact that they truly reflect a real experience and depict in a way or another the thoughts and ideas of a new generation. These two stories draw their distinguished locality from this fact and come close to a genuine literary work.

All the primitive stories mentioned in this study are short. In addition to that there is a long primitive story called "The Awakening Novel" written by Suleiman Faidhi Al-Mosulli and published in Basra in 1919. Therefore al-Mosulli can be considered as the first person who tried to write a long story or novel in modern Iraqi literature. This work, however, cannot be considered a novel as it is known. It was not the writer's aim to write a novel, presuming that he was able to do so. What we know about this writer, his education and the arts prevailing at his time suggest that he was far from representing this genre or knowing about its characteristics. He was one of those people who tried hard to achieve progress and development in their country. He took part in political activities and issued a paper called "Eikadh" or Reawakening.

He wrote this story pursuing the same goals. He presented many of his reformist ideas which he tried to spread ever since the announcement of the Ottoman constitution in 1908. He was influenced by a pattern of drama writings which were written especially for Ottoman and Persian schools in Turkish and Persian.⁽¹²⁾ It is an educational novel which did not pay attention to the elements of novel as it did to its educational aims. Thus it was a direct response to the needs of the Iraqi environment and circumstances at that time and an expression of the writer's reaction to those needs. Influenced by the plays which were written in large numbers at that time, the writer mixed between theatrical scenes and narration. His aim was to produce a work which can be both read and performed. The work was received warmly by public schools and many chapters were performed for a long time after its publication. Moreover, many playwrights who wrote for schools continued to imitate him in their works.⁽¹³⁾ This explains why many researchers considered the story as a play.

The writer links the story to the kind of stories known as dream-stories. He mentioned in the beginning that he saw the events in dream and an invisible caller asked him to record them and spread them among his people "so that they may be awakened and contemplate and become more aware." The writer then forgets the issue of the dream which he took as a framework for his work.

This novel — as we shall call it from now on — takes two distinguished types. The first type is similar to a prose-like play depending to a large extent on dialogue. It tells the story of the son of a rich but ignorant merchant who continues his studies despite his father's objection and becomes a doctor. After a while the father becomes broke and loses all his wealth. Then the son supports his father and spares him need and poverty. Other merchants who did not allow their children to continue their study find no guarantee and suffer a lot because they have lost their fortunes.

The shortcomings of this part are that the writer divides it into many small scenes thus making it very difficult to be performed. This was coupled with a clear weakness in the element of movement because the writer imposed directly his reformist calls and advice on the dialogue. These calls and advice are simplistic and naive. They are calls for education and underline its importance. They are also calls to abandon some bad habits and practices such as gambling, prostitution and so on. It seems that the Iraqis in those days were in need for some one to call upon them to abandon such things.

The second form which constitutes the second part of the novel tells a funny and simplistic adventure which is hard to believe.

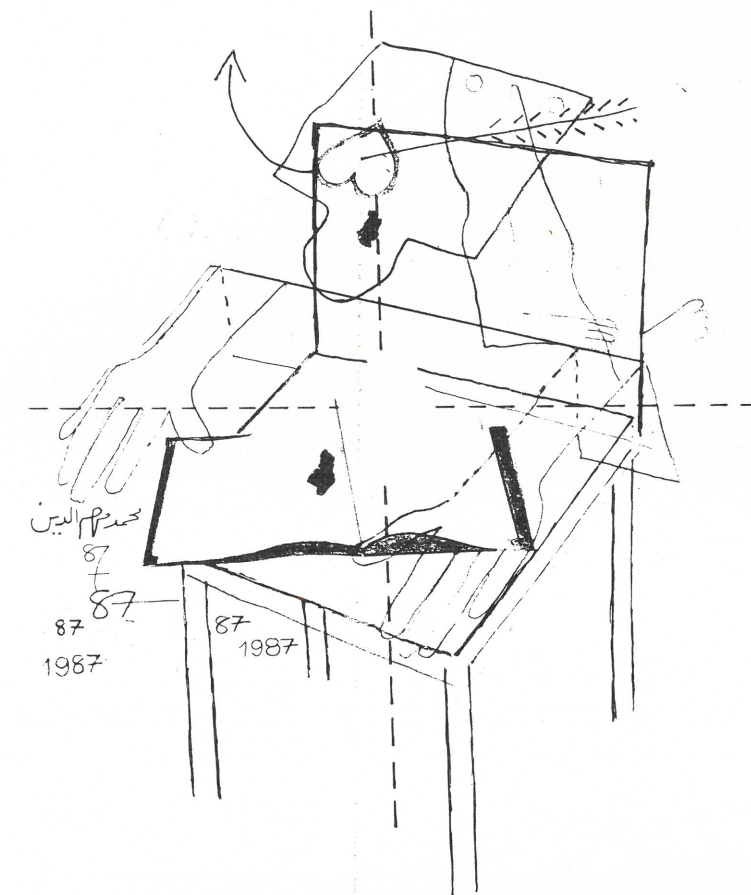
The main character of the novel, the doctor, goes through a lot of trouble to save the life of his friend who encouraged him to continue his study. It seems the writer wanted to prove a moral statement which says "favour should be returned in favour" in com-

pliance with his educational goals.

This work was considered as a novel because of this adventure which is narrated in this part and the great space of time in which its events take place although there is a clear disintegration and air of artificiality in it. The style here is merely one of reporting and far from any artistic features. It is very direct and lacks any real effort. The novel is clearly influenced by Arab folk tales and their language especially that of the Arabian Nights. This impact is very clear on this part of the novel

It is true that there are many defects in the novel which are a natural outcome of the education prevailing in that era and the education of its writer. However, on the credit side it should be mentioned that the "Awakening Novel" did bring the dream stories from the form of short story to the realm of novel. Moreover and because of its nature and the writer's aim it came closer to the Iraqi environment and the people's life and education than that of the dream stories which were full of symbols and in many instances not easy to understand by every one. Thus the "Awakening Novel" was more successful in bringing to the people what it wanted to say and to become a popular work. It was performed on school stages for a long time after its publication in the 1920s. Thus it served the purpose for which it was written and in the meantime it was a factor in making the genre of story a popular work of art among the people, a much needed factor in that period considering the unfavourable view of the conservative writers towards this kind of writing.

Translated by Hadi Al-Taie



The following is a story by Ata Ameen which serves as a good example of the dream-stories written in the early 1920s. It is called "How Iraq Prospers" and it was published in 1908.

How Iraq Prospers

By Ata Ameen

It was a clear and bright sky studded with glittering stars. Underneath, the ground was covered with grass and trees. The roaring seas and the flowing rivers, the lakes and the forests are wonderful and breath-taking.

It was midnight when I was walking along the Tigris river and reciting "The Poem of Creatures." Everything was quiet and still, but my mind was so confused and exhausted

that I felt tired and sleepy. So I sat down and rested my head on my hand. While I was looking at the river, the date-palms and trees, I immediately fell asleep.

Suddenly I found myself wandering along the bank of a river that ran through rose gardens and date-palm groves. The sky was clear. The wind was cool and gentle and the moon was shining. I looked behind and saw a

Footnotes

(1) These attempts began in the era of Suleiman Pasha who ruled from 1808 to 1816. He was succeeded by Dawood Pasha and Midhat Pasha whose reformist attempts are the most prominent of what was achieved in this century.

(2) He is Naom Fathalla Sahhar who translated a play from French into Arabic without referring to the playwright. It was published under the title "The Story of Latif and Khoshaba" in Mosul in 1893 and was performed at a school stage.

(3) Before this date there were only three papers in Iraq. After the proclamation of the Constitution the number of papers in Baghdad alone rose to sixty-six.

(4) Development of Modern Arabic Novel in Egypt, Dr. Abdul Muhsin Taha Badir, p. 147.

(5) Vol. I, Part 2, p. 68.

(6) Ata Ameen wrote two stories: "How Iraq Prospers, A Real Dream," which was published in Dar Al-Salaam magazine No. 17, vol. 2, Year 2, on August 24, 1919, p. 371, and the second story enti-

tled "Pause on the River Diyala, and a Talk with Venus" which was published in Iraq daily Nos. 283, 284, 286, 290, First Year, May 1, 1981.

(7) The writer was Mohammed Faiq Al-Gailani. It was published in *Lughat al-Arab* Magazine, No. 4, third year, October, 1913, p. 198.

(8) It was published in *Lughat al-Arab* Magazine, No. 8, third year, February 1914, p. 415.

(9) This was in August 23, 1921.

(10) The writer of the novel "A journey in the Thought" which was published in *Al-lisan* magazine, Part 5, Vol. 1, 1920 did not mention his name. Also the writer of "Pause over the River Diyala" whom we believe was Ata Ameen did not mention his name. This is obviously due to the political context of these two stories.

(11) He published them in *Dar Al-Salaam* Magazine in 1920, the first one in No. 1, Vol. 3, Third Year, January, and the second in No. 8, Vol. 3, April.

(12) Iraqi story in the Past and Present, Ja'far Al-Khalili, p. 168.

(13) Ibid. p. 170. P00

wide and straight road which divided the gardens and groves. I walked down along the trees and enjoyed the fragrance of flowers and the twinkling light of stars. Ahead of me I saw bright lights and realized that I was heading to a prosperous city when I approached its high wall I saw on one of the gates the following words: "This is the Queen of Asia." So, I realized that I was entering the greatest city in the world.

I walked through the gate and saw another wall. It was obvious that the city had double walls. Going through the inner wall's gate, I saw a man. "Hello," I said after I had walked up to him. When I asked him about the walls, he replied that it was a defensive wall surrounding the city. "Each side is fifteen kilometres long," he explained. "You have just seen the deep moat when you came through the first gate. It was built to prevent the enemies from reaching the walls. The earth dug out of this moat was later used for making bricks with which the walls were built. The walls are ninety-five metres high and twenty-five metres wide each. The top of the wall is wide enough for two big chariots to run on opposite directions. You may also see some 250 towers and 100 gates made of copper-like metal."

The river runs through the city with brick piers on each side of it. We walked together through the city roads until we came to a stone bridge leading to the opposite side of the city. The guard on duty stopped us. "You cannot cross to the opposite side at night, Sir," he said. "It's the ruler's orders, because a lot of robberies take place at night," he explained. My companion told him we had been sent by the ruler on a mission and that we had to cross to the opposite side that night. "Besides, it is not mid night yet!" he said.

The guard let us cross the bridge to the other side. There, the houses were of two or three storeys. The roads were straight and tidy. "In this city, there are twenty-five roads

running parallel to the river and another twenty-five roads running over it," My companion said. "There are also gardens, orchards and wheat fields so that the people would not starve should the enemy besiege the city," he added. Indeed, the city was built as a very well defended fortress.

My friend seemed to have liked my company and as a gesture of sociability he agreed to carry on with me and showed all places of interest in the city. So we toured the various luxuriously built palaces and gardens until we came to an enormous palace on the left side of the river. "This is a magnificent palace built by one of the kings of the Kingdom," he said. Next to it stood "hanging gardens" as high as a mountain. "Why do they build hanging gardens?" I wondered.

"These gardens were built by the same king," he explained. "He married a Median Princess whose yearning for her native terrain he sought to ease by creating hanging gardens simulating hills" he added.

I did not have the slight doubt that women of those times were well respected and cared for. I could hardly stop a couple of tears from running down my eyes as I remembered how illiterate, humiliated and ruthlessly treated the women of our age were.

I sought more information about that great king who was celebrated for his glory and dedication to restoration and construction. It is quite remarkable that although these places and gardens were built almost two centuries ago they looked so elegant and hardly affected by time.

"He is the great king Nebuchadnezzar, the son and successor of Nabopolassar," my companion said. He built E-Zida "Tower of Bebel" and Esagila "Temple of Marduk." So I was in the city of Babylon. I was extremely delighted and fortunate that I had the chance to visit Berosus, a well-known Chaldean astronomer, historian and priest of god "Bal" in Babylon who lived in the middle of

the third century B.C. I often heard that he had rendered into Greek a Babylonian book in astrology and astronomy. He also wrote a book on the history of his Kingdom Babylonia, based on ancient archives and ruins.

"Is Berosus, the priest still alive?" I asked.

"Yes, he is," my friend replied. "He lives in the temple of god Bal. Would you like to visit him tonight?"

"Yes, indeed," I answered. "But where is this Bal Temple?"

"Have you heard of the Tower of Babel?"

"Yes, I have."

"Well! there it is. Follow me. I'll take you to one of his close friends, Master Fani."

I was indeed grateful to my companion. So I followed him until after a while we arrived at a gigantic seven-stage round tower, built on a twenty-five metre high land. The higher you go, the narrower the stages become. The upper most stage, dedicated to worship has doors lavishly ornamented with ivory and gold-plated pillars.

I stood there examining the tower. "I wish my 20th century city looked like the third century B.C. Babylon," I thought. "Might, glory, splendour as well as beauty and charm can be seen in every corner of it." On the first stage, we asked to see the master. "He is in the upper stage saying his prayers," said one of the priests. Wait for him at the sixth stage until he is through with his prayers."

At the sixth stage, we stood in the waiting room looking at the glittering stars in the sky and enjoying the exotic beauty of nature. Suddenly, we heard someone weeping and crying. We turned around and right above us, in the temple's balcony, we saw to our surprise a man down on his knees shedding tears and talking to God in a tender voice and with a broken heart!

"My Lord!" he said. "Thy mercy I beseech. Thou we know not well yet. Let thy wrath be calmed for I feel thy wrath and I suffer desertion. O Lord! My sins are many and my wrong-doings are great. O, Lord, the

foreteller of the unknown, I unintentionally sinned and my gods were angry with me and punished me and cursed me. I knelt to thee begging. No one in this world feels pity for me or helps me, no one would listen to my ordeal. I'm almost dying and there is no one to save me, because I have sinned. Let the wind disperse my sins. My Lord! My sins are seven - forgive me Lord. Show me the right path."

He then wiped off his tears and looked up at the moon. "Who sits the highest in heaven?" he pledged. "Undoubtedly, it's thee to whom all angels kneel when the blue dome echoes thy sacred words." Then he stood up and went back to his seat repeating verses from the poem "Venus Leaving to Hell."

"It is one way hell," he repeated. "Those inside shall see darkness instead of light, dust instead of flowers and mud instead of fruit. There, the sun disappears and darkness prevails..."

My companion went in to talk to him. Shortly, he came out with a permission to let me in. I went inside a well-furnished and well-lit room. Before I got closer to him, the priest stepped forward and shook hands with me. He offered me a seat next to him, and I sat down. He then asked me how I was coping.

"Sir, I am a young man from the 20th century" I replied. "I live in an old town, whose name I am sure you know since you can tell the unseen. It is your advice which I seek and your piety I long for. Could you tell me what you know about my town and its future? Could it be revived after its demise and could it flourish again after its decline?"

After a few moments of contemplation, he took me to a dark room. "Look ahead and at that window," he said. "Through it you shall see 'the Iraqi history' running in pictures just like a film." I fixed my eyes on the window and saw the land of "Mesopotamia" with few little towns and their inhabitants. I

read the word "Sumerians" in the south and "Akkadians" in the north. To the north of the Arab Peninsula, I could see people living in tents in the desert between Iraq and Syria. At the top, I read the word "Amorites" Then an old sheikh moved to the valley and established a new kingdom. He picked up a town on the Euphrates as his capital. Its name was "Bab-ilu" i.e. "Gate of God" Then I knew it was Babylon, the place where I was standing.

From the sequence of images I watched the rise and fall of a magnificent city in history. The reverse happened. I saw people planning a city on a river not far away from the Euphrates. I waited for a while to see the city built. It had the shape of circle. "Sir, sir!" I exclaimed. "This is my city. This is Al-Mansour's city. I knew it. I know all about its past. Could you tell me about its future?" I asked anxiously.

"Come along," he said and took me to another room. There were clay tables with inscriptions on them. I thought this could be his library. He picked up one of the tablets which were carefully stacked and started to read the inscription on it. He seemed to be calculating something.

"Poor Baghdad," he said with painful smile. "You have suffered a great deal and showed patience in the face of swords and axes. You have been through hardships and disasters. You cried of agonizing pain yearning for salvation. As the lion tortures its

prey, you have been manipulated by time. As a child tears a great book, you have been torn by time. As a fanatic destroys the most beautiful work of sculpture, you have been ravaged by time. As an uncivilized person smashes a scientific instrument, you have been broken to pieces by misfortune. Yet, in heavens, your star seems promising, on earth, your luck is never bad and your future will be prosperous. Your colourful days will return. You will retrieve your might, wealth, dignity and power. Poverty and humiliation will no longer exist. Instead, science, literature and knowledge will dominate. Baghdad will be another London!" He paused and contemplated.

"But on one condition," he shouted suddenly. "The people of Baghdad should take my advice."

"What's your advice?" I interrupted.

"Come down with me," he said.

I followed him to another room in a lower stage. He took something off a niche.

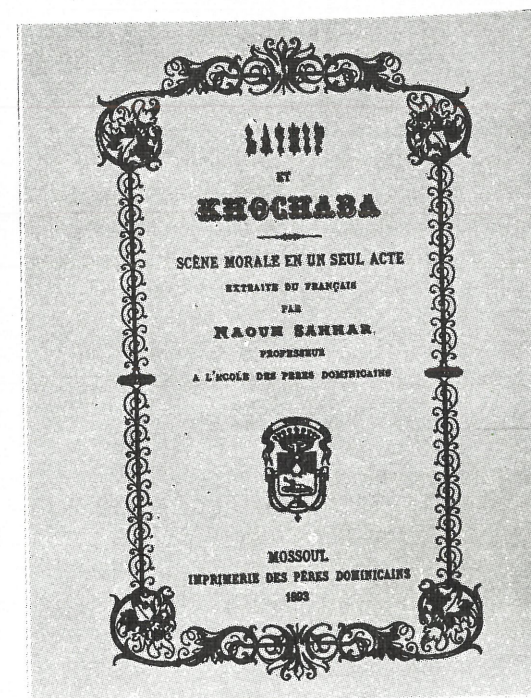
"Look son!" he added. "Here is a box of 'seeds' blessed by god and here is a cup of 'water' taken from temples. Here is a piece of 'cloth' filled with dust and collected from the temples' corners. Here is an 'instrument' ordering the wind to steer ships. Here is a book of the ancestors' knowledge. Take them all to your own people and tell them: this is your cure and that's all."⁽¹⁾

Translated by Afaf L. Ali

Iraqi Theatre

1880-1920

Ahmed F. Al-Mafraji



A poster in Arabic and French printed in 1893 advertising a play called "Latif et Khoshaba".

Theatre as an organised movement, is believed to have started in Iraq in the early 1920s. There are, however, some indications that this movement began as early as 1909. In his book *From the Artistic Revival in Iraq*, Abdul Mun'im al-Jadir, an Iraqi journalist, said that "Jeanne D'Arc" was performed in French in Baghdad in 1909. Its author, director and actors and actresses however, remained anonymous. This fact has also been confirmed in other publications tracing the history of stage performance in Iraq during the same period.

In the mid 1960s, serious individual inquest began on when this activity really started. Manuscripts of handwritten and printed plays show unquestionably that modern theatre movement in Iraq started in 1880.

According to a research I started in 1966, based on documents collected from several research and archives centres, Adam and Eve, followed by Yousif al-Hassan and Tobia were the first stage performances in Iraq in 1880.

These three plays are regarded as the oldest handwritten texts found up to now. However, "Latif and Khoshaba" by Na'oum Fathalla al-Sahhar is the oldest printed play text published in 1893. The Mardinian Chaldean Abbot Hormuz Nersu, Hanna Res-sam, Antoine Zbooni, Hanna Habbi, Gerjiss Qindala, Selim Hasson and Dr. Sulaiman Gezala, were among the very few people who can be considered as pioneers of Iraqi theatre. Dr. Gazala became famous for his poetic play "Accent of Heroes." This play was

reprinted in 1911. Dr. Gazala wrote a few books on medicine, language and sociology. They were published in Arabic and French. He also wrote a novel entitled "Ali Khoja."

The following plays are some of those which were published and performed in Arabic and English:

1) "Nebuchadnezzar" by the Chaldean Mardian Abbot Hormuz Nersu. It was performed for the first time at the Clerical School in Mosul 1888.

2) "The Martyrdom of Martresous": a 3-scene play translated by Selim Hassoon, a school teacher. It was published at the Dominican Fathers printing house in Mosul 1902.

3) "Sha'o" by Selim Afandi Hassoon, a teacher. It was first performed in Mosul 1905.

4) "Silistra" by the Turkish poet Namuq Kamal and translated by Muheddin al-Khayyat.

5) "Jeanne D'Arc" a four-scene play performed for the first time in 1909. It was performed in both Mosul and Baghdad and its proceeds were allocated for orphans.

6) "Arab Loyalty" in 95 pages by Antoine al-Jamil, published in Egypt in Al-Ahram Printing House in 1909, was performed in 1920 in Baghdad by the students of the Chaldean School.

7) "Martyr of the Constitution" by Medhat Pasha, a 5-scene play presented by a number of nationalist youth at the Assyrian Catholic Office.

8) "The Innocent Murdered" a drama in two-acts, first performed in December 1911 at the Dominican Fathers School.

9) "For God's Sake" a four-scene play written jointly by Hanna Resam and Habib Yousif Farjoo, performed in Baghdad in February 1912.

10) "The Two Young Prisoners" a 3-scene play, first performed in September 1912.

11) "The Destruction of Babylon" by Antoine Zbooni. It is about the Jewish alliance with the Persians to occupy Babylon. It was first performed in Mosul in 1913.

12) "Al-Samou'l" a play about Arab values.

13) "The Prisoned Prince" translated from French by Na'oum Fathalla al-Sahhar.

14) "The Two Prisoned Princes" adapted by Gerjiss Qindala and performed in Mosul in 1915.

15) "The Northern Tower" translated by the headmaster of the Chaldean School, his name remained anonymous.

16) "Ibn Wa'il" a three-scene play presented by the Chaldean School in Baghdad in July 1919.

17) "The Child's Cleverness" a historic play, translated by Selim Hassoon who was an education inspector (supervisor) in Mosul. The play was performed in Al-Tahira School (Virgin Mary) in 1919.

18) "The Stages of Salvation" was performed in June 1919 in Al-Tahira School for Assyrian Catholics.

19) "The Two Horned Alexander" was performed by the Assyrian Catholic Youth at the end of November 1919.

20) "Delegations of al-Nu'man to Kisra Enu Shrawan" was performed in 1920 and its proceeds went to the Iraqi 1920 revolution.

21) "Tariq Bin Ziyad's Conquest of Andalusia" was performed in 1920 with the proceeds to go to rebels in the south of Iraq.

22) "Salah al-Din al-Ayubi" the first play to be performed at an Islamic School in Mosul in 1921. It was directed by Ershad al-Omari an engineer at the Municipality of Mosul.

The Performing Troupes

Most of the documents on theatre activities in Iraq during 1880-1921 have shown that it was school headmasters and teachers who encouraged and supported the writing, acting and performing of plays.

Some of the oldest schools, known for their theatre activities, were the Clerical Dominican Fathers School, and al-Qassid al-Resouli in Mosul and Sham'un al-Safah in Baghdad. Private schools run by religious institutions, were also involved in theatrical activities organised and supervised by groups of teachers and their students. Besides, there were individual initiatives by educated and influential people. They used to invite a group of actors to perform a single work which, on most occasions, reflects a theme of certain interest to them.

Noori Fetah was one of these people who, with his group presented "Nu'man Bin al-Mundhir" at the Olympiad Cinema Theatre in Al-Rashid Street in 1919.

Following the British occupation of Iraq and under national government 1920-1958, there emerged a number of clubs and performing groups. They were motivated politically and they sought to stir national feelings against the British colonialism and the British sponsored royal regime. Undoubtedly, these clubs played an active role in flourishing the theatre movement which was used as a weapon in the fight against the British colonialists especially in Baghdad and Nineveh. Basra had no theatrical activities during the same period. However, during the four decades from 1880-1921 no licensed professional performing troupes or societies had a statute regulating their activities.

Direction

Some members of the then religious institutions lived and studied in Europe. They were well acquainted with European arts, and probably that was one of the reasons as to why they devoted much of



Na'oum Fathalla Al-Sahhar translated a play from French entitled "The Imprisoned Prince"

their time to theatrical activities. The first such group was educated in France. This could be clearly noticed from the works translated and performed especially in Mosul until to the British invasion of Iraq 1914.

Among the outstanding names in the field of drama, translation and stage direction was Na'oum Fathalla al-Sahhar who was in charge of art activities in the Clerical School in Mosul late last century. He not only played an important role in the field of drama but also influenced those who came after him. Others were Selim Hassoon, Gerjiss Qindala and Hanna Resam. They were involved in writing, editing, translation and direction.

Information about theatre direction is unfortunately not much. The documents made available hardly mention names whether directors of characters except names of high ranking officials attending the performances.

Among the few references found was the name Emanuel Rassam who directed a play for the Chaldean School in Baghdad. He was described in Al-Arab daily in 1918 as having been "successful in presenting the tragedy chosen for a literary purpose and suits the present reality."

A local newspapers in 1921 said that "Salah al-Din al-Ayubi" was performed in the same year by the Khidharya Islamic School in Mosul. It said, "Thanks to the young engineer Ershad Al-Omari who prepared the costumes for the play and organised its performance." Ershad al-Omari later became the Mayor of Baghdad.



Antoine Al-Jameel wrote "Arab Loyalty" in 1909

Actors

Schoolboys and their teachers were the only performers of that period. They were called "impersonators" Emanuel Rassam was among the well-known actors of that period. He was described by Al-Arab daily in 1918 as an actor of his time. Directed by Rassam, the play was performed in English. Fadhil al-Dibooni was another stage actor who played the part of *Al-Samou'el's son* in "Al-Samou'el". It was performed at the Catholics Club in Mosul on April 3, 1921.

Mustafa Nour al-Din al-Wa'dh in his book "Al-Roudh al-Ezher in the Translations of Mr. Ja'far" lists a number of stage actors some of whom became government officials. They were Qassim al-Alewi, Abdul Qadir Salih, Mahmoud Khalis, Najeeb al-Rawi, Ibrahim al-Wa'dh, Ali Ghalib al-Azzawi, Ra'uf al-Dehan, Abdul Aziz Majid, Ahmed al-Rawi, Abdul Qadir Jemil, Hassan Samir Tatar, Talib Mushtaq, Jemil al-Rawi and others.

Women and Theatre

Stage acting seems to have been dominated by men early in the century. No woman is reported to have stood on stage. The situation was never uncommon then. The absence of women from the stage can be attributed to the existence of a backward society that classified women as inferior creatures and denied

them freedom, education and confined them to house work.

Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi an Iraqi poet submitted in 1896 a petition to the Governor of Baghdad Nuru Pasha demanding the opening of a girls school in Baghdad. The application was sent to the highest authority in Turkey, and three years later, approval was granted.

"Al-rushdiya Female School" was opened only when certain conditions were met. The school building had to be detached with no windows overlooking the main street. The surrounding wall had to be high to prevent peeping by passers-by. Another school with similar specifications was opened in Basra in 1901.

The absence at the time of women from social life and theatre in particular had to be dealt with by either choosing plays with women having no part in them at all or asking men to do the part. It was difficult, of course to find such plays since they were mostly adapted from foreign texts especially French, English or Turkish. Some male actors who did female parts were subjected to family pressure.

Scenery and Setting

Stage setting was then confined to the use of painted rugs of sceneries needed for a particular performance. Asim Hafidh was one of the famous painters in this field. He died in the mid 1970s. One of the sceneries painted by Asim Hafidh was for *Salah al-Din al-Ayoubi* play.

Plays used to be performed in schools' courtyards. Some of these schools are still standing in Mosul (Nineveh Province) like "Sham'oon al-Safa" Clubs and societies had their plays performed on their own grounds (in their premises) or sometimes outdoors in neighbourhoods where there was enough space for the audience.

In 1919 Al-Arab daily said that British performing troupes used to perform at the car depot of the Sana' School, (Al-Ahali Gardens), (Chaldean School courtyard), (the Military Theatre at the public orchards) and at the open air movie houses built after the British entered Baghdad. We also found out that audience seats were divided into "special stand," "first stand," "second stand" and lodges (a box-like place separated from other stands). Admission fees varied for example the special stand cost "15 rupees" and the first stand "5 rupees" The lodges fee was not fixed but left to the generosity of the audience.

The Audience

The available documents show that the stage audience in Iraq under the Ottoman rule were divided into several types and each occupied different seats. As the documents note, the first days of a performance

would be allocated to male viewers and female viewers were allowed only later. Such performances were usually given at daylight for social considerations.

A woman would come wearing the veil (Aba) and a head cover which also covers the face. A male audience was either a student, teacher, poet, writer or a civil servant. As for performances given by the Christian schools bishops, clergymen, and priests would be the first to attend.

During the early years of British occupation, the British Military Commander, his representatives in other cities, some Iraqis from very rich families and members of diplomatic corps would attend first. Among the theatre-goers of this period were members of the British Army who were stationed in Iraq. They would attend the plays performed by their theatre companies or the Iraqi plays performed in English by private schools. Some groups would at certain days open their doors to the public but tickets had to be obtained first.

Colonel Leichman was a frequent theatre visitor. He was a well-known British commander who stayed in Iraq until he was killed outside Baghdad.

Some audience traditions of that period were drinking water and eating during the performance. They would also applaud after each scene or after hearing something they like

In an attempt to attract a higher number of audience the performing group would sometimes invite well-known poets to recite poems related to the occasion. For example, Dr. Muhammed Mehdi al-Basir (who then had the title of Sheikh), recited a poem entitled "*The Chivalry of al-Nu'man*" when the "*Delegations of al-Nu'man*" was being performed by the Scientific Institute in Baghdad on the 25th of December 1921. A comedian would entertain the audience during intervals.

The State and Theatre

There is no evidence that the Ottoman authorities paid attention to the theatre movement by allowing the setting up of troupes or associations or attending performances. What is known about the relation between those who ruled in Baghdad and the theatre is that one of the rulers "Jamal Pasha" had ordered his men to ban the showing of "*Arab Loyalty*" when the Scientific Institute tried to give a performance on the arrival of the Lebanese journalist Mohammed Rashid Ridha who was scheduled to give a lecture during the interval.

"*The Martyr of the Constitution*" was stopped for an unlimited period for certain reasons according to a declaration published in Al-Reqib daily on the 1st of Rabi' al-Akher 1327 Hijri.



Dr. Sulaiman Gezala became famous for his play, "Accent of Heroes"



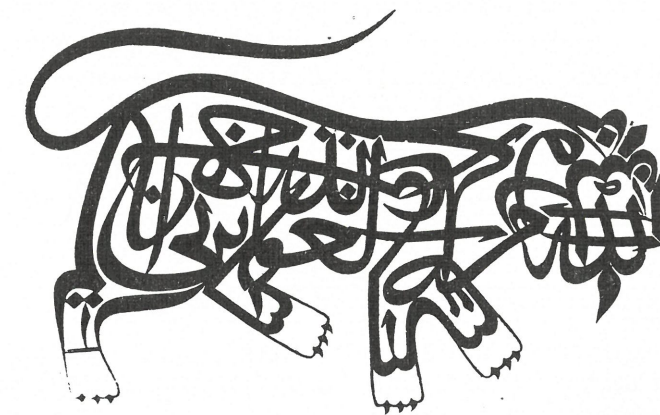
Ibrahim Salih Shukur

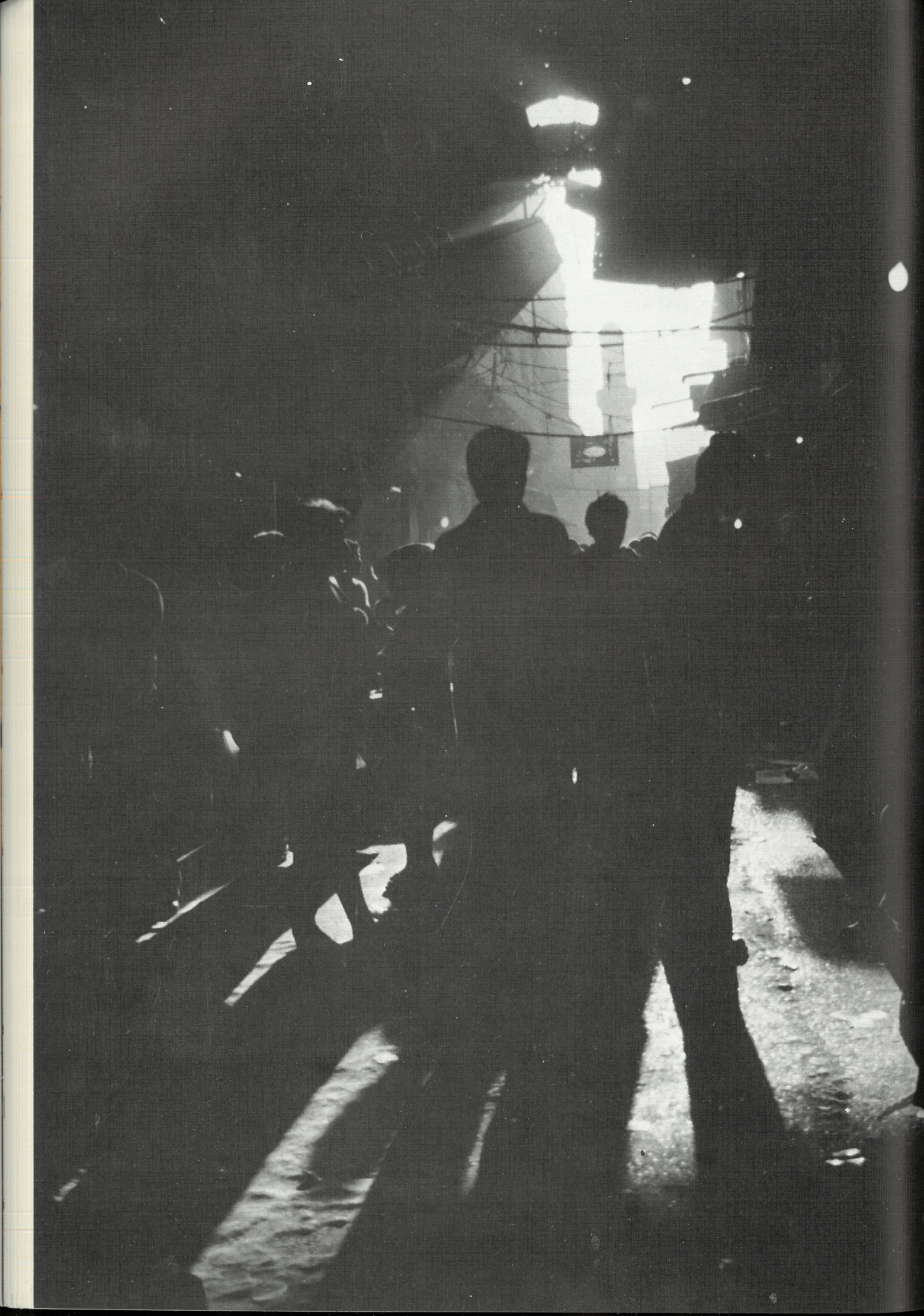
But the situation changed after the British occupation of Iraq. The British set up their own performing troupes that gave performances for their people only. They also invited British troupes to visit Iraq to perform comedies. They were also keen on seeing plays presented in English by associations and Arab schools. The important figures that attended the plays were the General and Political Governor (Colonel Leichman with his officers) as well as Miss Bell Secretary of the British Governor of Baghdad. She once wrote a letter to her father telling him about a patriotic play she attended. The play was acted by a group of young people. She told her father that the audience used to applaud whenever the word "independence" was mentioned during the play, and how she met with "the most deadly enemies" of the English people and she shook hands with them with a

friendly spirit.

Dr. Yousif Izziddin said in his book "*The Novel in Iraq*" that the entry of the British into Iraq led to "the spread of plays, the number of performances increased, the press began to publish reviews of plays which covered a broad range of subjects..."

It seems that the occupation forces had imposed a night curfew whenever there was a performance that would continue through midnight. The troupe had to get an official permission to work after midnight. "*Al-Istiqlal*" daily was quoted as saying that during the performance of the "*Delegations of al-Nu'man*" "the military and political governor allowed people to stay out until twelve-thirty after midnight."





The City as a Contemporary Labyrinth

The Nightmarish Representation of the Urban Experience in *Mapless World*

Sabry Hafez

Although avowedly dealing with the art of novel criticism and writing, the Mapless World bears some relevance to contemporary city life in the Arab world. Its authors, Jabra and Munif, could not escape their early interest in the life of certain segments of the urban society, especially the parasitical non-productive class. As such, it is not surprising that the novel has little action. In this article, however, Dr. Sabry Hafez studies its "urban experience" in so far as it reveals the increasing awareness of urbanism as a way of life and thought in the Arab world, hence providing the reader with an understanding that is bound to provoke counterinterviews.

Alam Bila Kharait (Mapless World)⁽¹⁾ published in 1983, is both an important novel and an interesting literary experiment, for it is a novel which has been written by two well-established novelists: Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and Abdul-Rahman Munif. It is not however the first experiment of its kind in modern Arabic literature. In 1936 Taha Husain and Tawfiq Al-Hakim wrote *Al-Qasr Al-Mas-hur*, (The Bewitched Palace) a narrative work which is interested as much in creating its fictional world as in exploring the nature of narrative and its inner mechanism. It endeavours to invert the creative process, purge it from its authorial tyranny, and introduce a new democratic dimension by allowing characters to question the motivation of the author, rebel against and interrogate him. It replaces the monological process of writing with a dialogical process in which the two authors pit their creativity against each other on the one hand, and against reality on the other. *Al-Qasr Al-Mas-hur's* point of departure is the Arabian Nights and its domain of investigation is the question of narrativity and the interaction between fiction and reality. The title, *Al-Qasr Al-Mas-hur*,⁽²⁾ itself implies that we are in a mapless world, a world

which has fallen under a magical spell, which disorients those who attempt to enter its sacred domain.

Indeed Husain and Al-Hakim's novel is not only the precursor of *Alam Bila Kharait*, but it is also, five decades after its inception, one of the operative subtexts in its fictional world. Although *Al-Qasr Al-Mas-hur* is never mentioned, there is, on one level or another, a constant dialogue with its structures and themes. From the opening pages containing its double epigraph the novel plays on the two main themes of *Al-Qasr Al-Mas-hur* the constant interaction between illusion and reality, fact and fiction, on the one hand, and the ambiguity of fate and the mysterious nature of the future, on the other. It establishes the significance of its title before initiating the reader into a world of imagination and fantasy in which the probable is more telling than the possible. For despite its interest in the question of creativity and its attempt to open up the mysterious world of artistic creation, *Alam Bila Kharait* is first and foremost a novel about a city that lost its magic. To intensify this loss the authors create an imaginary city named "Ammuriyya" but

beneath the thin veil and the fictitious nature of this imaginary city present day Arab city looms large.

The novel aspires, as its authors declare on more than one occasion, to be the story of the Arab city par excellence, yet it is mainly that of the large Arab metropolis; not only because it was written in one, or because its authors, one a Palestinian, the other a Saudi, made one of these large cities their chosen home for most of their adult life, but also because the novel is full of minute details which point to the typography of certain cities, and to their explosive growth. A number of large Arab cities are among the most rapidly growing metropolises in the Middle East. The regulating force of this exponential growth affects people's lives, changes their perception of the city and of themselves, and alters their existence spacially, socially and psychologically. It also permeates the modes of their discourse and the structure of their creative works. Indeed the city contributes to its inhabitants' way of looking at things, of conceptualising and evaluating, and to their vision and view of the world around them.

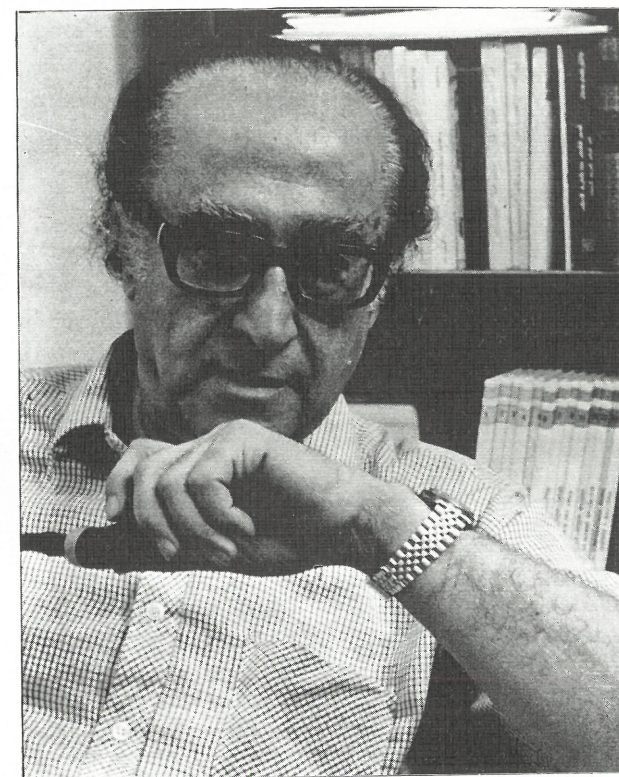
The study of the works of urban experience in Arabic literature shows that the transformation of the city affects the writers who tackle its issues and exerts a lasting impact upon the mode of such treatment and the nature of its discourse. The literature of the urban experience is but an expression of the city's constant transmutations which affect the writer as well as his writing. This is so because "when studying the modern city, we are engaged in a problem as much of language as of methodology. As soon as we begin to analyse our perceptions of the city, the activities of reading, naming, metaphorising, and rereading become inseparable from all our formulations about the city"⁽³⁾. Hence the transformation of Arab cities over the last five decades is inseparable from the transfigurations in the writers' perceptions, visions, and readings of their cities. This does not in any way infringe on the autonomy of the discourse on the city. This discourse has indeed "its internal rules, where discourse exercises its own control, rules concerned with the principles of classification, ordering and distribution."⁽⁴⁾

Alam Bila Kharait, in its texture as well as in its structure bears the metamorphosis of the large Arab city, and demonstrates the significance of the locus as both shaping and distorting force. For it is an exploration of the various forms by which the locus interacts with the human psyche and a demonstration of its ability to influence and modify the action as well as the characters' views and attitudes. The extraordinarily rapid, unplanned growth of these cities turns the calm city of the near past with its rustic values and tribal relations into a heartless metropolis. It transforms its familiar world into a devastating maze which alienates those who leave it even for a few years. The perpetually growing city

changes the old values, enfeebles the bonds of the tribe and replaces the smooth and calm rhythm of the past with a hectic one. It is a city in constant flux and in a permanent state of transition, a world whose motto is constant mutation, whose regulatory force is disorientation, and whose continual development outgrows any attempt to record it in a map, hence a mapless city. This very feature of the city is the main structuring principle in the novel — what I would call the puzzle form.

The puzzle is used here in its generic sense, as a contrivance designed to amuse by presenting difficulties to be solved by ingenuity or patient effort. It poses a question or a problem intricate enough to be perplexing to the mind. Sometimes it is a game made purposely enigmatic to test one's intelligence and endurance, a game in which one pits one's wits against the creator of the puzzle, hence the need for two authors to play the game of constant puzzle making and solving in the purposeful act of writing. It is a game which has enticed a number of critics to attempt to identify who wrote which chapters, and how much of Jabra's or Munif's technique, language, imagery or themes is detectable in their common novel. The puzzle's structuring principle is disorientation, yet at the heart of the matter there is a conviction that beneath the mass of confused and disconcerted pieces there is a right path and an order demanding discovery. Its main aim is to put the layer into a quandary, blinding him to the simplest of solutions and to intensify his dilemma in order to heighten the tension and increases the gratification of solving its problems. Its technique is allurement placing baits at every junction in order to lead astray the uninitiated and ensnare those who succumb to its temptations.

The puzzle form is at the heart of both the creative process based on elaborate encoding and recoding, and the constant transformation of the city which perpetually develops knots and tangles. The former is often associated with puzzle construction and riddle making, hence the need for deconstruction in analysing it. The latter, particularly in the case of the exponentially growing cities and the absence of planning, has the puzzle as its structuring principle where maze-like constructions are always in progress, creating so many false avenues that make a direct path from A to B almost impossible. Like the maze various routes are created in the overgrown cities, not because they lead anywhere, so much as because they lead nowhere. Hence many developed cities resort to the one-way system in order to facilitate the flow of traffic and at the same time perpetuate the maze, reinforcing the impossibility of the direct way in the realm of the labyrinth. The only means of avoiding the maze and establishing a direct route is to bypass the geography of the city and go underground. Yet it seems that the city's mark on



Jabra Ibrahim Jabra

the minds of its inhabitants is inescapable, and they have reproduced the maze in most of their underground systems. That is, the system that was built to overcome the maze becomes a new variation on its main structuring principle. It is significant that the Americans call it the subway emphasising its dependence on the way, i.e., the ground level system, whose major structuring principle is the maze.

Ever since the city spilled over its ancient walls and gates, it replaced them with the maze as its main defence, not only against its enemies but also, and ironically, against its inhabitants. The lesson of Beirut defeating both the invading Israeli army and its own inhabitants throughout the lengthy civil war is an obvious example. Although it may be argued that the development of the maze is a consequence of the unplanned and spontaneous growth, it is important to remember that this type of growth has its own inner momentum and logic, and, for many reasons, could not have been substituted by another form of development. Creativity and chaotic urban growth, therefore, share many qualities with the puzzle. These are the two main themes of the novel and the authors pit each against the other in an attempt to solve both at once.

On the first plane, that of creativity, the novel is a complex and fascinating exercise in intertextuality, for it conducts a polyphonic dialogue with a large number of texts and on various levels. Each level of

this intertextual dialogue reveals a layer of meaning as rich as the others. There is the textual dialogue with the Arabian Nights, both with its frame and enframed stories. At one level of this textual dialogue, it is possible to identify a subdialogue with *Al-Qasr Al-Mas-hur*, and another with the two novels of its main character Ala' Najib *Shajarat Al-Nar* (The Tree of Fire) and *Al-Nawaris* (the Seagulls). The dialogue between the present text and its fictional and fictive ancestors corresponds to a polyphonic dialogue between the present of "Ammuriyya" and its past, between illusion and reality, between the characters' perception of themselves and the others' understanding of them. As in Proust's *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, where the creative process is the only one capable of retrieving the past, it is here also the only process by which the bewildering city can be probed. For in the domain of art the city if multiplied, its past is resurrected to contrast its present, and certain aspects of its present are distanced and augmented to mirror its vital traits and accentuate their impact upon the characters.

The protagonist of *Alam Bila Kharait* is a novelist who is engaged in writing a novel about the city, "Ammuriyya" in which he lives and whose fictitious nature has been revealed to the reader from the outset. His two previous novels which are analysed and discussed by various characters in the novel are also about the life of the city. So we have as a result

two novelists writing about a novelist who wrote two novels and is writing during the course of the text a third one, and at the same time living and participating in the life of the fictitious city which they are creating. If this sounds a bit complex do remember we are in the domain of the puzzle. The fictitious novelist, 'Ala' Najib, is by the nature of his profession and by the scope of his undertaking an intellectual concerned with the problems of urbanisation which he approaches from the viewpoint of a historian and creative writer rather than that of the sociologist. This is in harmony with the dictates of the puzzle and the interplay between the themes of creativity and the city. The puzzle is inimical to the linear and logical development which a sociological approach might have produced, at the same time it is conducive to flights of fantasy (the creative process) and involves continual return to the point of departure, to the past (history). Indeed the mechanism of retreat and imaginative beginnings is necessary to the solving of the puzzle.

On the second plane, that of hyper-urbanization, the novel posits the city with its overcrowded space and complex strands of past and present as a contemporary labyrinth and matches its labyrinthine nature with the elaborate puzzle of narrative. This is intensified by the text's resort to the technique of the novel inside a novel, not once but twice or even thrice. The triad process of encoding or enfaming makes it as difficult to follow the development of its plot as to live in the disorienting grip of the exponentially growing city. The puzzle form in *Alam Bila Kharait* employs both the technique of the jigsaw puzzle and that of the maze. The former is used in the assembling of the real life story of its heroine Najwa al-Amiry, whose intertexts are both Layla al-Amiriyya and *Shahrazad*, and whose complex relationship with the protagonist mirrors his endeavour to fathom the mystery of the city and humanise it at the same time. The latter is used in the construction of what may be called the detective plot of the story, the story of Najwa's murder which is introduced from the beginning of the novel and remains unsolved by its end. The lack of solution is completely in harmony with the fact that the inhabitants of the overcrowded city are doomed to remain in the grip of its maze.

The labyrinthine nature of the city is reflected in both the language and structure of the narrative. The prevalence of interrogative and conditional sentences from the outset of the novel and throughout its development creates the linguistic equivalent of a state of loss. On occasions the language of narrative reproduces the maze in its sentence structure. Many sentences start with a subject compounded of three terms, each of which is qualified by a relative clause, the verb or verbs that follow connect the subject with a triadic object, each of whose

components is in turn qualified by a complex adjectival phrase. At this point, on his knees from the fatigue brought on by his losing effort to follow the parallel construction and to keep in mind the triadic distinctions, the reader begs for an end to the sentence and secretly prays, in order to catch his mental breath, that it will be followed by one or two relatively short or simple sentences. But what he is given is a mere comma or a semi-colon, followed by a conjunctive which leads to another sentence constructed on a pattern as turgid as the one that preceded it. The result is an overweight syntactical system of contrasts and balances of punishing density. The system is reinforced by a pitiless anaphoric compulsiveness; and the whole has the effect of shunting the reader's energy from the substance of the discourse to its labyrinthine structure.⁽⁵⁾

In the realm of this structure, and in harmony with the prevalence of the interrogative and the conditional, a number of character types flourish, and one of these types is that of the diviner. The novel opens with the epigraph recounting the story of Sibyl, the beautiful seeress of Cumaean who withdrew from life and abode in a cave in which she collected heaps of dry leaves. She was consulted by many, one of whom was Aeneas. Her particular way of giving sortileges was by throwing out a handful of leaves on each of which she wrote a letter and it was thereafter entirely up to those who solicited her prophecies to order these leaves and make sense of her oracle. The choice of this opening not only emphasises the mood of questioning but also links fate with chance, accentuates the haphazard nature of human destiny and suggests at the same time the multiplicity of readings.

In addition the novel develops its own evocatrix in the character of Aunt Nasrat whose oracle-like pronouncements permeate the text and tinge many of its sections with a sense of doom. Her invocations adumbrate many events of the novel and establish its inner logic of development. But like Cassandra or Zarqa Al-Yamama whose prophecies no one believed, her inspired utterances go unheeded. Yet they succeed in charging the text with an oracular tone which enhances the use of interrogative and conditional in its language. This is intensified further by the novel's structure in which we know from the second page that the two main characters are doomed, and see throughout the 383 pages how every attempt to escape from the maze of their predestined fate is doomed to failure.

Yet their attempts enable us to see the impact of the transformation of space on modes of human interaction. The two main characters are mentally and physically suffocated by the overcrowded city, but they cannot escape from its power. They ward off its intrusion by flights into the tribal past and



Dr. Abdul Rahman Munif

yearning for rural values, yet they ironically establish their escape havens in close proximity to the city unaware that its constant development and the perpetual interaction between the city as a centre of gravity and its peripheries affects the life in these orbital satellites and renders any escape meaningless. The city's impact reaches the furthest haven and the commuting between the city and these marginal satellites is a concrete evidence of man's oscillation between the past and the present, between the village and the city, between the tribal mode of existence and urban polity. Both Najwa and Ala swing between their enslavement to urban life and dependence on its conveniences, and their nostalgia for the past and desire to combine the comforts of the city with the strong emotional support of tribal consanguinity.

They have residences outside Ammuriyya which represent both the coastal (al-Majnuna) and rural ('Ayn Fajjar and al-Jabal) urban satellites, but the fact that they spend little time in these havens confirms their marginality to both the city and its people. Furthermore, the use of these escaping places is dictated by the city which forces certain actions to take place outside its domain. One of these actions is the assembling of Najwa's tribal past, which is entirely meaningless to her life in the city, and proved, later on, to be completely undesirable and had to be discarded, for it could be used against

her in her fight to control her share of the city, i.e. her inherited part of it. Indeed she had to deny publicly what she sought secretly (her tribal past) in order to establish herself as worthy of being completely accepted in the city. Yet this denial of origin is also a denial of originality, for in order to inherit her share of the city, Najwa had to perpetuate the lie that she was the daughter of Muhsin Al-Amiri and not of Shihab Khalid, her real father. The entanglement in the city's maze demands the renouncement of any tribal connection, yet the brutality of the city generates in the two protagonists a strong urge to retreat into the countryside, and a yearning for tribal ethics.

The novel investigates the impact of the transformation of space on the modes of human existence and types of their interaction. The process of urbanisation in this novel is both a negative and positive force. Its character is dialectical and its mode of operation is more than simply destructive. Indeed the city is clearly associated with the tomb, it buries the characters' past, hides their origin, entombs rural life and tribal ethics. At the same time it shares a number of characteristics with its counter image — the womb. It drives characters to their destruction, yet as a man made cosmos it aspires to shelter its people from wild and often merciless nature, and even save them from their own follies. Urbanisation is at the basis of all attempts to

encounter nature and posit a human substitute to its naturalistic mode of existence. Thus urbanism is at the heart of man's struggle with nature and resistance to its wholistic and often irrational ruses. It is man's chosen habitat, yet it is also his most hated prison, and the novel is full of satirical remarks about 'Ammuriyya' and the idea of the metropolis itself.

The novel endeavours to record the metamorphosis of the Arab city over the last twenty-five years through employing the impact of the time-gap which enables the text to contrast the city's present with its near past, and summarises its major changes which contribute to its present. When its main hero returns after many years of absence in Europe studying Art History, he is shocked by what has happened to his old city. The deformation of the city goes hand in hand with the deterioration of his tribe. So the tribal escape is eliminated as an option, and the city becomes man's destiny and his doom, and here its contradictory character is at its height. It has liberated man from the bonds of the closed almost incestual relations of the tribal mode of existence, yet its constant transformation undermines the positive aspects of this freedom. It is an expression of man's fight for a world of his own making in which he is perpetually trapped between his utopian world and its deformed realisation.

The process of urbanisation is a product of human endeavour, and a manifestation of its limits. It works both on and through people. This implies that its hold over people is never complete, yet urbanism is experienced exclusively as a negative force when it ceases to be a means for realising a goal and becomes an end in itself. The city attempts to demonstrate its dialectical character in *Alam Bila Kharait*. It serves the important function of broadening the terrain on which its characters operate. This is achieved on both the literal and metaphorical levels. Urbanism is not exhausted in those public and private spheres where urban polity proliferates, buildings spread horizontally and grow vertically at a constantly accelerating speed, and people move from the country to the city. It is more ubiquitous and is expressed in a range of public spaces and spheres that traditionally have been characterised by the absence of urbanism. It is ironic that the heroine, Najwa, who expresses clear and strong aversion to urban polity ends by being an urban developer and plan to participate in the very proliferation of the city which she constantly criticised. The transformation in her character, which surprises her lover, Ala, is a powerful evidence that the city's momentum prevails despite every resistance.

Urbanism is also expressed by the way in which the city, technology, power and ideology come together to produce forms of knowledge, social relations, and other concrete cultural forms which

function to actively alter people's mode of existence. This is seen in the novel most clearly through the dynamics of displacement and alienation and their impact on the character's perceptions of the world and their role in it. *Mapless World* has a very elaborate character map in which the dialectics of displacement and alienation regulate the characters' interactions. The main feature of the novel's internal logic of characterisation is duality, as if the duality of authorship has resulted in granting each character his or her double. Ala was granted his double in his uncle Husam Al-Ra'd as well as in the hero of his novel Riyad Al-Burhan, Adham in Khalid Shihab, Safa' in Khaldun, and Sadiq in Hadi. Likewise Najwa is reproduced in Saba, Na'ila in Mayyada, Sibyl of Cumae in Nasrat 'Smat in Irene and Rafi'a in Nahid. The doubling is in harmony with the condition of the maze in which many parts are reproduced. It also develops a sense of disorientation forcing the reader to question the identity of the character when the latter is introduced into the narrative without his or her name in the first instance.

The duality of characterisation and the enigmas of identity are intensified further by the duality of bonds between various characters. The novel has two systems of relationships: the tribal, based on kinship and marriage, and the urban, based on professional and business transaction. A map of the characters' relationships, if drawn, would resemble that of the maze, for the novel attempts to demonstrate that the complex interaction between its characters resulting from the retention of tribal kinship links in an urban setting reinforces the labyrinthine mode of existence rather than enfeebling it. This is so because the urban rules of interaction take precedence over the tribal one, yet the labyrinthine mode of interaction is conducive to preserving certain tribal values which obscure both types of relationships. This complicates the map further by interrupting the smooth operation of relationships and colours them with nightmarish qualities. The constant violations of tribal ethics and rebellion against its taboos is coupled with an inherent respect for them, a condition that enhances tension and sustains the nightmare.

In this novel one encounters the city as a contemporary labyrinth. The various textual strategies of work in this novel attempt to show that the labyrinthine and nightmarish nature of modern day Arab metropolis are detectable both in the novel's theme and in its structure. The novel shows us how the metamorphosis of the city permeates all its activities including its narrative discourse.

Notes:

(1) *Alam Bila Kharait*, by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and 'Abd al-Rahman Munif. (Beirut, Al-Mu'assassa al-Arabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 1983).

(2) In addition Muhsin Jasim Al-Musawi suggests that the title of *Alam Bila Kharait* is directly derived from the following quotation from *Al-Qasr al-Mas-hur*: "ays'aluni ana 'an ism mamlakatih? wa-kayf la n a'rif? Inn kull ma a'lam 'an hadha al-makhluq anahu malik, wa-last adri ayn mamlakatuh wa-la ayn mawqi'uha min Kharitat Al-Alam?" (Q.M. p. 172). Al-Riwaaya Al-Arabiyya: Al-Nash'a wa-l-Tahawwul. (Baghdad, Maktabat Al-Tahrir, 1986), p.34.

(3) William Sharpe & Leonard Wallock, "From 'Great Town' to 'Nonplace Urban Realm': Reading the Modern City" which forms their introduction to: *Visions of the Modern City*. (New York, Columbia University, 1983), p. 7.

(4) Charles Lemert, Michel Foucault: *The Social Theory as Transgression*. (New York, Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 62.

(5) For a detailed discussion of the impact of language on the structure of artistic text see Eliseo Yivas, *The Artistic Transaction and Essays on the Theory of Literature*. (Ohio State University Press, 1963), p. 245.



Talib Makki, Horse, Bronze, 40 X 30 cm

The influence of folklore on modern Iraqi literature

Kadhim Sa'deddin

Like most of world folk literature, Iraqi folk literature has its own fables, fairy tales, social tales, bedouin tales, 'thieves, robbers, outlaws and beggars' tales (picaresque's tales), prophets and saints tales, miracle tales, symbolic tales, puzzles and riddles and proverb tales. There are also romances, and sagas.

The above-mentioned aspects of folklore have certain influence on written literature. Nearly all modern Iraqi poetry made use of folk beliefs, vernacular vocabulary and phrases, proverbs, songs and folk games, as poets preferred using free verse in their subjects that dealt with people's life.

In the beginning, modern Iraqi poetry was full of Greek and Roman symbols, but as critics disapproved of using foreign themes and symbols, Iraqi poets fell back on their ancient history, whether Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian or Arabic, and found a rich source which could be used in different ways.

They also found that the daily life of the people was equally rich with interesting, more expressive and effective subject-matter.

That was the situation in the 1940s, and reference here must be made to the poets, Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, Nazik Al-Malaika, Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati and later, Hussein Mardan and Mohammad Jameel Shalash as they represent the early attempts in this field.

Short stories and novels also made use of folk tales in their various kinds such as the well-known Arabian Nights, Kalila and Dimna, history and interpretation of the Quran and the Prophet Tradition.

Drama, at first, employed historical Arabic themes to rouse the spirits and ambitions in the hope of throwing off the yoke of British occupation.

Many Iraqi novelists made use of folklore in their works. Ja'far Al-Khalili wrote more than three collections of short stories, most of which were influenced by the traditional way of life in Najaf, his native town.

He also wrote two novels both serialized in his *Al-Hatif* newspaper. The first one is *The lost* serialized in 1937 and then published in a book in 1948. In his introduction to the novel, Al-Khalili says that it aims at social reform and seeks to put one's own abilities in the public interest, whether in theory or in practice. It is a story of a naughty boy whose father has sent him to a religious tutor to learn reading and writing and reciting the Holy Quran. He happened to quarrel with one of his fellows and he hit him hard. Afraid of his father's punishment the boy decided to run away.

One day the boy met a dervish whom he admired and accompanied on his wanderings throughout Iraqi towns and villages. When the dervish died thirty years later, his disciple returned to his family and got married and became a religious teacher.

Al-Khalili's second novel *In the Villages of the Jinns* was serialized at the end of 1941 and its first part appeared in book in 1945 while the second complete edition came out in 1948.

The novel was written under the harsh circumstances of the Second World War. The writer dreamt of a world without wars, where people can live happily and peacefully. He found that this world was the kingdom of the Jinns.

Hamadi Ali, a graduate of the Higher Teachers' College, Arabic Department in the 1940s wrote two novels: *The Chief of the Tribe* 1952 and *Bahira* 1954.

The Chief of the Tribe is a short saga of the bedouin life in Iraq in the 1950s or a little before that period.

It portrays bedouin manners and customs, virtues of bravery, hospitality, honour, pride and platonic love.

The Man of Secrets 1954 by Abdul Kareem Abas is the story of a man who travelled from Baghdad to North Africa where he got acquainted with a priest who trusted him and showed him the wonders of the universe and how a man can overcome the devil.

Gilgamesh Has No Hope by Khidhayir Abdul Ameer is a folk tale for which the writer chose this title because Khalil, the hero of the novel gained nothing from his long journeys like Gilgamesh who could not obtain the grass of immortality which the snake stole from him.

Abdul Khaliq Al-Rikabi's *Who Opens the Talisman Gate* in 740 pages is about the rural life in Iraq and the struggle of peasants against feudal sheikhs (lords) and their men. The novel is an extensive review of the folk life in the countryside for about two centuries, and it covers resistance against the Ottoman occupation of Iraq.

In this novel the reader comes across many aspects of Iraqi folk life such as customs and lullabies, lamentations, love songs, folk medicine, costumes, furniture, weapons, farming and its problems and so many other things that concern rural life.

There are three trends in Iraqi short story that are influenced by folklore. The first trend observes the daily life and records the most spectacular events in the lives of the individuals hold on to customs that are on the way out. This trend is well represented in the short stories of Mahmoud Ahmad Al-Sayyid (1903-1937) and Ja'far Al-Khalili who tried to condemn old fashioned customs and expose superstitions that stood in the way of progress in modern life.

In Al-Sayyid's *Badday al-Rayiz* Badday sets out to revenge the murder of his brother on one spring night when the Euphrates was at its highest.

Al-Khalili's stories are mostly folk tales, anecdotes, fairy tales and fun-making which he derived from his own environment for a didactic aim. Al-Khalili published six collections of short stories, most of which deal with folk way of life.

In *These People*, 1956, the story *One of Two Cases* is a folktale of two sisters, one married a farmer and the other a clay-oven maker. The first needed rain for the land, the other needed dry weather and sun for baking ovens.

Pray on Mohammed is a funny story of a villager who came to study theology and religious teachings in town. His friends suggested he should get married and that they would find him a good and beautiful wife. According to the customs of those days he was not to see his wife except on the wedding night. To his astonishment, the bride turned out to be a man - one of his colleagues. His friend played a practical joke on him, so he left his studies and returned to his village and took up farming.

The second trend is represented by Khidhayir Abdul Ameer who makes use of fairy tales and keeps to their traditional techniques but grants the narrative sections some modernity or depicts the events in modern localities and times.

The Inn and the Coffin, a story included in his collection *There Was a Tale* Beirut 1974, tells of a man who got rid of his daughter from his first dead wife by

leaving her at night in a deserted and ruined inn where she was to meet her death, but seven cats saved her.

The Last Song of Homer is the tale of a porter who was hired by a young man to carry his shopping home. Having hired him several times, the young man trusted him and brought him home and introduced him to his six brothers who gave him a kohl jar. At home in the morning the man took out the kohl jar and treated his eyes with the kohl, but he got blind. He decided to get in touch with the seven brothers to reproach them and teach them the facts of life, but he could not find his way back to them. So he went on chanting his story, as Homer did, at the market places.

The love and lover and What Happened Between Them, Baghdad, 1979, is the story of a young girl who lived with her brother. He used to leave her alone at home and spend the night with his friends in drinking. Late at night, he would return home drunk. The girl got married to her brother's friend after interesting events.

The third trend is represented by Lutfiya Al-Delaimi whose stories show the conflict between old and new values and criticize the negative aspects of life.

In *The Night of Phoenix* the writer makes good use of modern technique both in content and style. She shows the conflict in the manners and customs of the countryside which, in the 1950s could not, of course, keep pace with the modern aspects of life in the town.

As for drama, it is well known that it is the most recent of Iraqi literary and artistic genres, as the oldest known text were dated 1880. Father Hanna Habash who lived in Mosul, north of Iraq, wrote three plays: *Adam and Eve*, *Yousif al-Hussan* and *Tobia*. Those plays, and the others that followed, derived their themes from the Holy Bible and the Quran and the history of the Arabs. Few of them relied on the ancient history of Iraq before Islam. However, most of these plays attempt to entertain, or preach their audience a moral lesson. So they found an easy and short way through folk tales especially the Arabian nights and the Siras (Arab biographies) as these stories contain wonderful adventures and interesting love affairs, as in *Qais and Lubna*, 1934, by Khidhr Al-Ta'i, and *Majnoon and Layla in the Twentieth Century*, 1948, by Shihab Al-Qassab.

As these plays depend upon folk tales, they are abundant with curious and wonderful events which attract the attention of the audience despite the lack of logical connection and sequence. This, of course, leads to compound plots or a plot within a plot, or a serial of events which demand a host of unnecessary characters. Hence rise the shortcomings of dialogue, except in the hands of an expert playwright. To write a dialogue of a play, the playwright should develop the plot and unveil the characters and help the producer in his work. Such a dialogue requires telling in-

teresting tales, anecdotes, jokes, wise saying, proverbs and merry songs, and playing on words or pun in vernacular. The absence of such elements lead to stilled conversation and does not make for a natural development of events in the play.

One important play which completely depends on folklore is Yousif Al-Ani's *The Key*. It is written in Iraqi vernacular and makes use of a children folk song known throughout the Arab world.

Yousif Al-Ani, hit upon the idea of the Key in the rhyme and endeavoured to search for that key, the instrument of gradation of the series of obstacles which confront the people looking for "solution". Any ignorance or precipitation certainly leads to further undue suffering and failure.

The Sparrow and the String, by Miqdad Muslim, depends on the Iraqi folk tale of the Locust and Sparrow. The locust ordered her husband the sparrow to take up any trade so that they could make their living. All the trades he tried proved profitless, until at last she suggested that he should be an astrologer. Being astrologer was a success since by chance he could catch the thieves who stole the Sultan's treasures.

Once Upon a Time by Qassim Mohammad is based on the tale of a prince and a beggar's daughter. The prince wanted to marry the beggar's daughter but the daughter wanted him to practice all kinds of crafts, until at last she asked to learn carpet weaving which eventually saved him from a gang of murderers.

Most of Taha Salim's plays make use of folklore elements, such as the belief in fortune-telling, palmistry, jinnis, ghosts, wells haunted by evil demons, the use of proverbs and folk songs, vows and so on.

The Milk Cow is based on one of Jeha's jokes about the Sultan's elephant which was free to go anywhere in the city. The people complained to the Sultan of his harmful elephant.

As for poetry, it is understood that Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, for example, has used a number of folk items which later became part of his diction. This is quite clear in the verse cut on the tomb-stone of a young man.

You who read my letter
weep for my youth
yesterday I was alive
Today, under the earth

That is a popular scene for the opening of his poem. The poet draws an image of himself dead and buried. He tells whoever passes by his grave and read, the inscriptions on his tomb-stone to mourn his perished youth, for only yesterday he was alive too.

Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab portrays the blind prostitute behind a great wall like that of Gog and Magog, in the Iraqi folklore which, it is said, they licked until it became as thin as an onion skin. When they got tired they said to themselves, "tomorrow we'll con-

tinue the work," but they found the wall the following morning as thick and strong as before. So they went on working until a child was born to them and they give it the name of "In Sha' Allah". The child grows up and destroys the wall.

The Song of the Jinnis' Daughters shows many folk concepts about the jinnis who do not sleep, but roam on hill tops and run in graveyards, flirting with each passerby and sing to him love songs. They look like butterflies of sun-rays flapping on tops of the trees.

Iram of the Pillars is completely devoted to a folk tale. The poet says in the preface to his poem:

"To the Moslems, Shaddad Bin Ad built a Paradise, Iram as an imitation to the Paradise of God. When God destroyed the people of Ad, Iram disappeared and became invisible except once every forty years. Happy is the man to whom its gate opens."

The poem is one of Al-Sayyab's most interesting ones:

My great grand father said to us: "O children, one night I was fishing in a deep creek, the clouds opened and a lovely star appeared. It reminded me of my distant 'star' sleeping on her flat roof, so I walked under the sky without a guide. Had I walked a thousand steps or a thousand miles? I did not know except that I came to the stone wall of a white castle and walked round it like Sinbad who walked round the rook's egg. Then I reached the place of the pillars and the horrible gate. I stopped and knocked at it until I was tired. I sat down like a humble beggar. When the morning was about to whisper out its light, I dozed. I woke up and thought a thousand generations have passed. I saw nothing in the place of the wall except the water of the creek glinting in the sun.

"I won't see it," Our grandfather sobbed and said "I won't see it," But I'll see it in you. You're the perfume now that my flower has withered. If anyone of you sees Iram, let him knock at the gate and not fall asleep."

Another Iraqi poet, Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati employs aspects current in his days along with those he read in ancient Arabic books.

In *The Phoenix* the dead lover's soul follows, everywhere, the pigeon that flew away in Madrid while his body went back to Tihama in Hijaz on the Red Sea. The blind poet of Ma'ara closed the doors in his face and disappeared. An angel warned him, "The phoenix is too big to be hunted, so go back to cemeteries, yellow books and inkwells and be an emigrant from one country to another."

In *Something from One Thousand and One Nights* he makes use of the way Schehrazade tells and ends her stories, and the devices of the Arabian Nights like the magic winged-horse which takes him to faraway lands the Schehrazade never visited, holding the lamp of Aladdin and could go back to Babylon. He saw the traitor of Jesus in the court of the happy king. He discovered the New Continent with the ship of Sinbad

full of lightning, thunder, prophecies and promises. When the poet discovered Iram of the pillars he fell asleep for more than a thousand years waiting for "the absent one" to come on his horse.

Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati cleverly employs the lives of great Arab poets to reveal the curious details of his own era in a fascinating way that no other modern Arab poet could do.

Abu Zaid El-Suruji, the beggar hero of Al-Hariri's Maqamat, who appeared in various cities telling stories of adventure to people, comes to life in a poem by Al-Bayati as a beggar who sings in brothels and at the king's feasts, seduces young girls, kisses people's hands and curses them. Abu Zaid was singing when Hulago invaded Baghdad. Troy surrendered, and when gallows were erected at her gates. Wherever and whenever he appeared he was followed by locusts and pestilence.

In *The Rumiya of Abu Firas* Al-Bayati employs folk symbols such as owls, fortune-tellers, the bird of superstition, Jonah and the whale, the ancient Arab belief that a murdered person calls on his people and will never repose until they avenge for his blood.

It is noticed that Al-Bayati's favorites are the well-known names of lovers, revolutionists, thinkers and artists to whom he resorts so often. He says that their martyrdom remains a bridge that civilisation and humanity cross over to a more perfect state.

Deek El-Jinn (778-849) who is so often mentioned in Al-Bayati's poetry lived in Syria and loved a lady named Warda and married her. Some of his relatives accused her unfairly of loving another man. The accusation was so cunningly perfect that her husband believed her betrayal and killed her in a fit of jealousy and anger. It is said that he burnt her body, but eventually he knew that she was innocent. Some say he mixed her ashes and blood with the earth and made a cup for his wine to embrace her for ever lest anyone should share her with him. He passed his days composing the best elegies of her.

The other symbol that appears in the poems of Al-Bayati is Wadhdhah El-Yaman. It is said that Wadhdhah and the Sultan's wife loved each other. The Sultan (A.D. 705-715) was presented some precious stones which he sent to his wife with a sergant. When the servant came to her he saw Wadhdhah with her. She hurriedly hid him in a trunk. The servant took advantage of her situation and wanted one of the stones, but she cursed him and sent him away. The servant went back to the Sultan and informed him of the story. The Sultan did not believe him and ordered him to be killed. He then went to his wife's compartment and saw her combing her hair. He sat on the trunk the servant described, spoke to her amiably and asked her for the trunk. She could not refuse giving it to him. So it was carried to his assembly where it was buried in a deep pit and no one heard of Wadhdhah ever after and she never disapproved of what her hus-

band did.

Abdullah and the Dervish by Yassin Taha Hafidh 1980 is the longest narrative poem in Arabic in which various folk elements are used. It is based on the tale of Abdullah and the Dervish in the Arabian Nights, but as a poetic work it has no relation in its symbols and method to any Arabic or foreign text.

The framework of the Arabian Nights' tale is that Abdullah came with his eighty camels loaded with merchandise to an oasis near Basra. A dervish arrived at the same source of water. He had come from Baghdad, the destination of Abdullah. They both talked about many things including their resting place. The dervish informed Abdullah of a treasure of gold and jewels, and agreed to load the eighty camels with what they could take from that treasure, forty camels to Abdullah and forty to the Dervish, but Abdullah was now so greedy that he every now and then asked the dervish to relinquish ten camels of his share until the dervish had nothing of the treasure except a little jar of ointment.

Abdullah now asked the dervish about the wonderful qualities of the ointment.

"Anyone who treated his left eye with it, would be able to see the treasures hidden under the ground and if he treated his right eye with it, he would be blind," said the dervish.

Abdullah demanded to treat his left, so he could see the treasure of gold and precious stones hidden under the ground. But he doubted the dervishes words concerning the right eye and thought that if it was treated he would get possession of those treasures. He demanded the dervish to oint his right eye but the dervish warned him of doing that. Abdullah pressed on him, and the dervish did as Abdullah wishes. He soon lost his eye sight and begged the dervish to do his best to return his eye sight to him, but in vain.

The dervish gathered the treasure-loaded camels and drove them to Basra leaving Abdullah alone at the oasis where a passing-by merchant saw him and took him with him to Baghdad.

Yassin Taha Hafidh made essential changes in the sequence of events and their identification.

Abdullah of the folk tale is an evil character but Yassin made it a tragic one. He hoped to get the "key" for all problems and the answer to all questions. He wanted to get vision but he failed even to see the simplest things. We are between two choices, either to stand by Abdullah and accept our human situation or feel pity for him if we wanted to admit the legitimate dream of man and the condition of suffering to reach it, as the poet says in the appendix to his poem.

The Relationship Between Contemporary Poetry and Arab Heritage

Kadhim Sulaibi Al-A'yidi

Any observer of the history of the new poetic movement, in Iraq or the Arab world, can find that the movement, at the beginning, was faced with conservative attitude. This is because some Iraqi and Arab poets, particularly those who espoused national thought, saw in this movement some sort of detraction from heritage.

National thought has always been associated with the Arab heritage, history and the Arabic language. But this association with the national concept is more apparent now than it has been at any time before in the history of the Arab nation. In fact, the recent emergence of the question of heritage is closely and directly associated with this concept. However, the question of heritage itself is not a recent matter. It has accompanied the contemporary movement of Arab awakening since its beginning. The second half of the 19th century witnessed the revival of Arab heritage after a state of stagnation brought about by the Ottoman rule and the subsequent developments.

At that time, those involved in national thought were required to realize an important fact, that is "national thought cannot take shape and become free unless it expresses the contemporary industrial civilisation because the ideas of Arab nationalism, democracy, capitalism and socialism are only an organic organisation of this industrial civilisation."

The Second World War and its aftermath had their part in highlighting this fact to the national forces. Thus, such elements as the circumstances under which national thought developed, its hatred of British colonialism and Nazism and the influence of socialist countries had helped give the national trend a more profound and comprehensive view of life in general.

Further, the political and social events which then took place in the Arab world had their great part in pushing national thought forward towards a progressive path. The partition of Palestine was in fact regarded as a historic landmark that accentuated the crystallization and development of national thought. This also gave rise to the new poetic experience which

was started by some Iraqi and Arab poets.

There is no doubt that the appearance of such national parties as the Independence Party in Iraq and the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party represents an important development in national thought. It is well-known that the Arab language and literary heritage on the whole are important tributaries to national thought. In this context, Dr. Taha Hussein, the renowned Arab man of letters, said: "Arabic poetry helped give rise to Arab nationalism, and has contributed to its development and it is Arabic literature which has provided a fertile ground for Arab nationalism to grow."

Since the 19th century, the writers in Iraq have advocated Arab nationalism, and national thought has found its way to the Iraqi poetry through the poems of Al-Kadhimi, Al-Rusafi and many others.

The national thought's implications expressed through this poetry in general were superficial and sentimental, taking of the views which sanctify the past as a basis to inspire enthusiasm and revival. The young poets who espoused national thought in Iraq or in the Arab world inherited the experiences of the poets who had preceded them in this field. Thus, the political affiliation of those poets with Arab nationalism came within such a simple context that could not cope with the spirit of the age. As a result, this revolutionary context was reduced, at the beginning, to some sort of slogans which could not meet the requirements of the Arab reading public in pursuing the developments of the world surrounding them.

The relationship of those poets with heritage is more like ideological affiliation than anything else and their relationship with Arab poetic heritage is genuinely ideological. Thus, heritage cast its shadow over their talents whether through the language, thought or feeling. This may explain why some young readers who espoused national thought in Iraq or in some other Arab countries, took, at the beginning, a conservative attitude towards the new poetic movement. However, under the influence of the development undergone by national thought particularly the

Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, a number of Iraqi Ba'thist and nationalist poets such as Ali Al-Hilli, Mohammed Jamil Shalash, Zeki Al-Jaber, Adnan Al-Rawi, Hilal Naji, joined the new poetic movement in the years which preceded the 1958 Revolution in Iraq.

This shows that the Ba'thist and nationalist poets' mature view of the idea of nationalism has led them to take an attitude in favour of the new poetic movement. It also shows that the mature awareness of the idea of Arab nationalism held by the Ba'thist and nationalist poets is the motive behind those poets' attitude towards the renewed poetic movement. But any explanation of the attitude of those poets would be inadequate without having into consideration the question of their attitude towards heritage and their understanding of it.

Most of these poets have read the most important sources of Arab and Islamic history, Arabic literature in general and the history of other nations' arts.

Further, most of those poets have mastered a foreign language, which enabled them to read foreign literary works particularly in English and French. This, it is understood, has formed the basic sources of the poet's knowledge.

In fact, those poets have seen heritage as the inexhaustible fount from which they derive their symbols.

But, this has not prevented them from borrowing non-Arab symbols particularly from Greek and Roman myths. However, some Ba'thist and nationalist poets have marked modern Arabic literature by Arab rather than Greek and Roman symbols and myths.

The poetry of Shadhil Taqa, Ali Al-Hilli, Mohammed Jamil Shalash, Hilal Naji, for example, is pregnant with Arab symbols. In fact, those poets' understanding of heritage stems from their ideological view of the Arab spirit. The Socialist Arab thought is characterized by the dynamic view of heritage which is seen as an expression of originality.

This dialectical relationship between modern Arabic literature and heritage has marked the works of modernist poets. Evidently, modern literature always derives its origins from heritage viewed from contemporary angle. Also the question of heritage in the ideology of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party has never been an occasional question. It has always been a focal and fundamental point in Arab thought. Furthermore, this view of heritage is not intended to interpret the past but to revolutionize the present.

When we study those poets, we find that they have established a sort of interaction with heritage and the contemporary culture. Such interaction would make

the relationship with the past dynamic and creative.

In this context, Dr Elias Farah, notable Arab thinker, has said that such a relationship between vital heritage and vital past cannot exist without undergoing a genuine and active experience and suffering from being away from the realities of the nation, from its potentiality and from the checked energies of masses.

"All this suffering would lead to further struggle which is the genuine means to maintain this relationship between heritage and the spirit of the age" he maintained. The relationship between contemporary poetry and Arab heritage is a dialectical one because the contemporary poet neither approves of the whole content of heritage nor rejects it as a whole. He sees heritage through modern spectacles.

The departure of those poets from the formal framework of old poetry and their interaction with the new poetic movement would not do harm to heritage but would rather destroy the stagnant form of heritage which is capable of development and renewal. What is important is the spiritual and humanitarian value inherent in heritage and not its form. Modernist poets are careful to keep the essence of heritage but they rebel against its rigid forms and moulds which are not in keeping with the spirit of the age.

To highlight the profound relationship between heritage and the Arab poet, we may cite some poems by poets who have made good contributions to the new poetic movement.

Here is a poem entitled "Men Have Come Back," by Shadhil Taqa:

*I asked camphor tree,
As it may know
That we, one evening,
Planted a moon on it,
A small moon with dark eyes
We lighted for it candles and camphor
And offered sacrifices to it
Shyness dissolved in amazement
And we burnt our fingers unaware.*

Here is another piece from a poem entitled "Suhaym" by Hameed Sa'eed:

*O, Suhaym, feeling, midday heat and boredom
Are windows of death on life, suffering and sleepless
Are the cloud of endowment on the virtuous
And the bandage of migrants in the dessert of time
The humble passer-by is the one
Who puts letters to death in mildness
And in his mihrab, night leads other by the nose
Who melts iron and smashes rocks.*

From a poem entitled Jamila Buhayrd by Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, we select the following lines:

*Jamila, my noble sister
The future is for you as you wish
And when, you feel and when you hear
Pains take you above ground
Above peaks and above clouds
You rise up to the throne of goddess
Like distracted goddess
And wandering breeze.*

From a poem entitled "Ghabil in Dimilmadja" by

Shadhil Taqa, we cite these lines:

*My brother, Ghabil, is looking in the ruins
For the secret of the bull
For a knife to thrust in the heart of the picture
For a rope useful for hanging the moon.*

Evidently, all the above examples show the dialectical relationship between the contemporary poet and Arab heritage and the poet's dynamic interaction with heritage.

Translated by Adnan Salman



Al-Sayyab and Christ

Shihab Ahmed

"Christ is the perfect symbol of the hidden immortal within the mortal men."

C.G. Jung

"What about the books I have kept with you? Most important of all is the Holy Bible. Keep them with you till I get back from England," said Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab (1926-1964), the Iraqi pioneer of Arab modern poetry, to Lebanese Poet, Yousif Al-Khal in a letter dated November 10, 1962.

The Bible seems to be one of his favourite books. He used it as a background for his recurrent allusions in his early poetry to Christ. This article tries to show how Al-Sayyab has dealt with Christ; how his treatment had undergone a gradual yet subtle development in his poetry; and what merits Al-Sayyab had managed to elicit out of his manipulation of Christian symbols.

Christ is usually styled as the "Saviour":

*It is not through the report
that we believe now*

We have heard him for ourselves

And we recognize that He

Is indeed the Saviour of the world (John 4.42)

Or he is instrumental for "The remission of sins":
Drink, all of you, of this

*For this is my blood of the New Testament
Shed for many, to the remission of sins. (Mathew 26:28.)*

The idea of sacrifice is latent in Christ's figure and his physical death is a means to a noble end: the salvation of his followers. Moreover, he is bound with the idea of resurrection and rebirth. Having remitted the sinners' sins, they are born anew.

This general idea that Christ is a Saviour is not new: it is universal in scope dating back to pre-Christ period. "It revolves around the hero of the Saviour who is eaten up by a beast, and yet he reappears miraculously after he defeats that beast. Nobody

knows when and where such motif arose... However, each generation has come to identify it as a norm that has been passed down from one generation to another. We can certainly say that it arose at a time when Man is not capable of conscious thinking. In other words, the character of the hero is an archetype which strikes its roots in the history of humanity. ("Man and his Symbols," C.G. Jung, translated by Samir Ali, Baghdad, 1984, p.91).

"The contents of the personal unconscious are chiefly the feeling-toned complex, as they are called. They constitute a personal and private side of the psychic life. The content of the collective unconscious, on the other hand, are known as archetypes." (C.G. Jung, *Four Archetypes*, 1959, p.4).

As such, Al-Sayyab has his own reasons to allude to Christ and some Christian rites in his poetry. He tries to appeal to the collective unconscious of his readers, and aims to give his poetry a universal touch by going beyond his individual belief, to a doctrine outside his locale. Moreover, he intends to fuse Christian tradition with his own, namely, the myth of Tammuz (the seedbed of fertility, rebirth, immortality and the cyclic movement of seasons). Not only this, he occasionally uses the Christian allusions as a prop to build his poems whether in terms of the poetic imagery he coined or the structure that his poem grows from. These will be clearer in due course.

It is observed that the crucifixion of Christ belongs to the archetype of fertility that one can find in the rituals of Saviours as Osiris and Tammuz, simply because they have likewise a holy birth and they are semi-divine. They live or are killed and brought to life again. In other words, they belong to cyclic religions: there is the cycle of death and rebirth. (Man and his Symbols, C.G. Jung, p.141).

Reference to Tammuz helps pave the way for us in this attempt, Al-Sayyab, through the figure of Tammuz and Christ, tries to project some of his outlooks whether pertinent to his personal life or that of the course of history in his country on those figures. Sometimes, he goes a bit further to work out

an outright identification with Christ in his poetry.

Christian tradition represents for Al-Sayyab a fruitful source to draw upon in his poetry: his use ranges from a mere simile or metaphor to a complete thematic structure as it is shown in his poem *Christ after Crucifixion*. For instance, as a simile:

*Wafiq's window in the village
Joyful at the square
(As a Galili awaiting the Walk
and Jesus).*

(*Wafiq's Window*),
collected poems, p.117

Echoes of the Last Supper are felt in his poem *The Mother and the Lost Child* when the mother addresses her daughter with a high tone of pathos:

*O, daughter: Come back to me, here is the food
And water. Be hungry: take out of my flesh
A food.*

Collected poems p.154

(*The Mother and the Lost Child*).

Fully aware of the implications of Christ, Al-Sayyab makes a cursory reference to Christ whenever the occasion permits. Even in his emotional poems such as *Take Me*, Al-Sayyab puts his blame on his beloved to know if she is pitying her heart which is broken under "the cross hung in the rock of pride." Christ, however, is not directly referred to in these poems. This may indicate that Al-Sayyab in his early life was not familiar with Christ through primary sources but apparently through books that drew upon some of the Christian tradition. When his physical health declined and he found no chance of being "saved," he tended to make his allusions rather outspoken; this shows that he intends to select ideas implicit in Christ figure that go in harmony with his psychological situations. (His biographies show that he has led a miserable life which is full of suffering, disillusion and estrangement; let alone the idea that he is a sickly type). In London, he writes:

*I moved my legs, they did not obey, paralyzed
The overflowing blood is dead in them, youth
Is extinct, the road to the grave open,
Towards the grave, a road stretches itself,
A door fashioned out of the cross's wood
And Christ is dead,
Noah got lost in the flood.*

(*Job's Gospel*),
collected poems p.272

Apparently, the second phase in Al-Sayyab's treatment appears when he fully identifies himself with Christ. Both have suffered: Christ at the hands of non-believers (Philistines), Al-Sayyab under the burden of his social reality. His identification looms up largely in his poem "*Stranger at the Gulf*." Feeling very lonely and totally helpless to come and visit his family, he pities himself. It is actually a

feeling of an alienation animated with a gnawing nostalgia for comfort, homeliness and intimacy:

*Among awe-ridden villages and foreign cities
Are my steps. I sang your beloved soil
And carrying it, I am Christ dragging
His Cross in exile.*

(*Stranger at the Gulf*),

collected poems p.321

Here is an example of Al-Sayyab's total identification with Christ. This identification, psychologically speaking, has its own risks which Al-Sayyab seems to be unaware of. He may fall a prey to what Jung has termed as "psychic inflation," "To identify oneself with this archetype would be a dangerous example of what Jung calls psychic inflation. In literature, the personification par excellence of the old wise man is found in Nietzsche's Zarathustra. According to Jung, Nietzsche identified himself with the figure of Zarathustra, that is, the archetype of the old wise man (Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, 1970, p.710). In this respect; Al-Sayyab's identification with Christ works on a subtler level because Christ is subliminally superior to Zarathustra, hence, the wider appeal to the collective unconscious.

Significantly, in his *Homage to Gailan* (his son) one can find the idea of fertility — the linking line between Christ and Tammuz. Not only does Al-Sayyab fuse the two together, but also he proceeds to juxtapose them in a single stanza. It is the mythical sacrifice which is viable both in Tammuz and Christ, it is an individual death for the sake of the collective.

Daddy...as if the hand of Christ

*In it, as if the skull of the dead bloom in shrines
Tammuz came back with an ear playing in the wind*

(*Homage to Gailan*),

collected poems p.325

In some examples Christ breathes his soul into the leaves, and addresses the asleep:

O, thou asleep

Hurry up, darkness is born

And I am Christ, and I am Peace

(*Homage to Gailan*,

collected poems p.327)

Now Al-Sayyab's identification with Christ turns to have a political ring; it has become a well-established motif in his poetry, and gradually develops into a leitmotif. This means that whenever Al-Sayyab finds the opportunity propitious; he never hesitates to reflect a Christian allusion in a new guise. We even notice in his poem some literal wording of the biblical phraseology:

My blood is the wine you drink

My flesh is the bread that a hungry get

(*The elegy of gods*)

Collected poems p.352

Christ's physical death (his sacrifice) stands for fertility; his blood waters the aridity of the wasteland:

*Christ is nailed on the Cross and triumphs
And his blood cultivates roses in the rock.*

Curiously enough, in his introduction to the collected works of Al-Sayyab, Naji Alwash concedes that death becomes mythical and it is represented by Tammuz and Christ. He further points out that the change of death into a myth is not a poetic visualization; it is of an ideological content as well: Al-Sayyab used to find salvation in the active struggle, in the actual blood and flows: "every drop shed from the slaves' blood (Alwash, Introduction, p.mm).

On the other hand, the most complex phase in Al-Sayyab's treatment of Christ in his poetry is in his poem *Christ after Crucifixion*. He has virtually pieced together all the above threads on both the structural and thematic levels. Christ's figure embraces the whole texture of the poem where Christ has been used as a masque by Al-Sayyab to speak through. This poem serves as an illustrative example on Al-Sayyab's poetic skill at the use of the dramatic monologue which works on two levels: the direct and the indirect. On the direct level, it is the voice of Al-Sayyab who speaks on behalf of Iraqi people, the indirect is that of Christ speaking through Sayyab's masque. (Ali Haddad, *Aqlam*, August, 1986, p.73 "*How Al-Sayyab Read the Arabian Nights*).

What is stressed here is that Al-Sayyab's "*Christ after Crucifixion*" has received special critical attention; it is intimately related to Al-Sayyab's poetic sources and influences. Two points raised by Hassan Tawfiq and Ihsan Abbas that are worthy consideration in this regard.

Hassan Tawfiq, however, contends that Al-Sayyab's imagery (i.e. Christian imagery) is inspired by Edith Sitwell poem "*Canticle of the Rose*" (Hassan Tawfiq, Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab: *Artistic Study*, p.346).

But what about Al-Sayyab's earlier allusion to Christian tradition and why "*Christ After Crucifixion*" in particular? Is it because of its explicit title. If the case is so, then this exposes a simplistic understanding on the part of an academic researcher. As to the idea of foreign influences, it has not as yet been academically settled for the views presented are not solidly based (Our article *Al-Sayyab and Comparative Studies*, *The Baghdad Observer*, 24/12/1985).

Again, Ihsan Abbas harps on the same string: "It is Sitwell herself that has infused Al-Sayyab with courage to use symbols of Christianity due to her repetition of Christ" etc. He then proceeds: "Al-Sayyab used to have a preliminary feeling of Tammuz myth, and this paves the way to the symbol

of Christ. It is a transition from the idea of sacrifice to another... Tammuz likewise dies to enliven life." (Hassan Tawfiq, Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab: *His Life and Poetry*, Beirut, pp. 346, p.366).

That Sitwell's poetry is the motive behind, Al-Sayyab's use of Christ's figure is a precarious idea because Abbas does not define an absolutely exact date for her "influence" on Al-Sayyab and what is raised against Tawfiq's view can also be valid here. (Consider Al-Sayyab's poems before 1959-1963). Besides, it is Al-Sayyab's very awareness of the significance of using mythology in poetry; an aspect he has recognized in major modern poets such as Eliot and his "*Wasteland*" That is why he tries to elicit dimensions latent in those myths to project upon his social reality. Greatness in poetry for him is to be fully immersed in tradition; he aims to carry tradition "in his bones," to employ Eliot's term, that is why in "*Christ After Crucifixion*" he makes Christ and Tammuz all one and his correspondence is rendered possible by drawing upon the wine and bread in "The Last Supper" and blending them with the relation of life between earth and sun in Tammuz story:

*I died, for bread to be eaten in my name,
to be planted with the season,*

How many a life I live, for in every hole

I became a future, I became a seed,

*A generation of people, my blood in every heart,
Either a drop or a little of it.*

(*Christ after Crucifixion*)

Collected poems, p.459.

Christ After Crucifixion, however, is in a sense the poem of a human fate: Man goes beyond his ordinary intentions to play his role. It is a poem that shows victory. In short, it is "a conflict of two powers" (Majid al-Samarraie, *Al-Jumhuriya* daily, Dec. 23, 1986). Christ in this poem is the revolutionary who preaches the message of life. Al-Sayyab works out a parallel in Jaykour rebelling against the images of death that hovers over there. It is this conflict — Man with life that is latent in him and the power of his enemies — that sustains the poetics of this poem.

In conclusion, Al-Sayyab's treatment of Christ figure (Christian allusions are included) has gone through gradual development; it passes through three generative phases each of which is shaped by his individual psychology and the socio-political circumstances. Between his use of a mere simile and his manipulation of Christ as a masque to speak through lies an area of experimentation and poetic dexterity. Though Al-Sayyab has occasionally encumbered his poems with myths that do not grow from within as his critics have pointed out, he has sustained Christ as a leitmotif that encompasses his perspective — it is an archetype that enriches the texture of his poems.



Musical Composition in Iraq

As'ad Mohammed Ali

Poetry, painting and sculpture are the oldest forms of art in the Arab world. Sculpture, for example, was the commonest means of self-expression by ancient Mesopotamians. Art in general, being a vehicle of two-way cultural influence, developed significantly during the heydays of the Arab-Islamic state. But it came to a halt following the Mongolian invasion of Iraq when artistic and cultural wealth, including music, was almost entirely destroyed. However, except for the dark years of the Mongolian invasion, music, like literature and architecture, flourished during the Islamic period.

There is no better evidence of musical development there than the manuscripts left by intellectuals like Al-Armawi, Al-Farabi and Avicenna. These scholars studied thoroughly the origin of indigenous music within the framework of the then prevailing theories which in one way or another expedited cultural revival.

The end of the 19th century witnessed a new cultural renaissance. Early this century, for example, there appeared a significant number of brilliant poets and artists who dominated the cultural arena. Musicians, however, had little opportunity to show their skill. This is because, unlike other artists, musicians had contacts only with their fellow-musicians. The pioneer artists made a great deal of travelling. They visited Turkey and Europe and had as well an opportunity to get acquainted with various schools of art. They were able to digest the artistic dimensions without neglecting their Islamic culture and Mesopotamian heritage. Being familiar with the new artistic means the artist could practise them and introduce them in his works. Hence a new style would be established and later developed by the next generation.

This is true of the art of painting. But what about the art of musical composition which is considered new to us as Arabs. Musical composition in the 1940s was seen as a socially irrelevant profession. In other words the appearance of pioneer musicians (performers and musicologists) undoubtedly paved the way for embodying this "strangeness" in the first tunes of the National Symphony Orchestra. It was followed by

the first attempts of orchestral composition in the late fifties by Fereed-Alla Werdi.

A musician, not only needs to study and follow up musical research and terminology, but also to have high morale and strength to establish himself in the face of social challenges. The emergence of a new era in music and the social opposition it faced did actually happen in Iraq.

Arts, grown and developed in Iraq, were influenced directly and indirectly by certain elements. Playwriting, for example first appeared in the late 19th century at a time when music was confined to maqam singing in Kirkuk and Mosul. Uthman Al-Mosuli played an outstanding role in invigorating the maqam and muwwashah singing and musical composition for lyrics.

The third decade of this century was, in fact a turning point in the history of music and musical education. The Fine Arts Institute and some private schools were set up to teach music though practical and theoretical method no progress took place in the field of musical composition. However, composers did not appear but none of them followed a particular musical method. They merely depended on their own personal efforts and individual studies.

This was also the case in the Arab world although one finds some minor differences in the quality and quantity of the musical works. However, Egypt, for example, excelled other Arab countries in musical composition.

The majority of Arab artists, poets and authors started their career depending primarily on the works of their predecessors in establishing or developing their own forms of art. But in the art of music this "borrowing" was confined only to playing. Nothing was seriously done to establish the foundation of a creatively well-composed music based on academic knowledge. Arab music composers being few in number and whose production, if any, was relatively low in standard, were to blame for the professional gap separating them from the rest of the Arab artists. They did practically nothing to bridge this gap. Worse

was a call rejecting any practical or theoretical initiative that would help perpetuate the fundamentals of musical composition in Iraq. Yet, literary critics and authors call for stylistic "modernisation" in all literary genres. Those who opposed musical initiative justified their notion by saying "It is a futile attempt to embark on something new in the field of musical composition at a time when global artistic compositions have reached the peak of technical, formalistic and expressionist advancement." Yes, this could be true, but technical transformations have not inhibited the emergence of several contemporary composers who have, up to now, been composing music according to academic measures including neo-classism and other numerous trends that followed the Baroque age.

Some local composers gained international reputation by benefitting from the trends of "the national school" which emerged in the 19th century, thanks to Czechoslovak and Russian composers. In the 20th century another group of composers have followed suit in depicting their local music through the "national school" such as Bartok, Kodale, Khachadurian, Sibelius, Amirov and Sonyi Argibet. Along with others, they were able to create "Symphonic Music" with a distinctive local identity. The supporters of the "strange" ideas, believe that as long as technical and artistic transformations are taking place in Europe then they are applicable only in Europe. And any local initiative copying those transformations are looked upon as an adaptation or imitation of European art of music (as if it were sinning against our music while we are badly in need of all the artistic technicalities of music. Those critics are unaware of the fact that there are countries in the world that surpassed Europe in technology, art and way of life. About half a century ago these countries were not as developed as they seem today. Their artistic movement, including musical composition, lacked serious initiatives. Having surpassed Europe in art and industry, those countries were trying through their artists to achieve a national artistic identity. This actually took place in Japan, China and some Latin American countries.

In the Arab world, Arab composers were fundamentally influenced by the "national" trends. In particular: Abu Bakr Khairat, Jamal Abdul Raheem from Egypt, and Abdul Amir Al-Sarraf, Abdul Razzaq Al-Azzawi and Mundhir Jameel Hafidh from Iraq. (Fereed-Alla Werdi is considered the pioneer of the Iraqi symphonic music that is not influenced by these trends, in other words he composes music for purely achieving classical symphonic formations.

As these trends were still new, the first attempts in symphonic compositions were modest. Therefore direct imitation was clearly noticed. Though the local metric modes and the Arab tone was present, the classical and romantic styles were predominant. Such

works were still considered necessary as they would, in the end, lead to musical composition of higher artistic technical capabilities.

Artists and writers on one end and musicians on the other form an imbalanced equation, not only in Iraq but also in the Arab world in general particularly in Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon. The reason for this imbalance lies in the fact that art and literary works are relatively of a high standard because there has been a general interest and awareness that motivates artists and writers to do their best. They are always on the lookout for new styles and ideas which might be borrowed from others but were "seasoned" with local flavour and identity.

Equally important is that there was a lack of a general response to symphonic composition. Some musicians oppose any initiative that would reverse the situation while others have a feeling of hopelessness concerning symphonic compositions.

Notwithstanding, artists all over the world have made use of various general artistic techniques along with introducing their local heritage and folk tales in their works. I wonder if any Arab or non-Arab critic tried to draw a comparison between the style of Latin American novels (e.g. *Cien años de Soledad* by Marquez) and the style of the national artistic trends, i.e. benefiting from the local folk tales, traditional motifs and subjects. This also applies to music. National composers used local folk tales in their works. Wagner who established a new operatic trend known as musical drama, was in fact inspired by the local myths and Germanic superstitions. With the passage of time his trend evolved with the development of artistic means to become unequivocal in the works of modern composers like Stravinsky, who created music with magical atmospheres based on myths especially in his ballets "The Firebird" (1910) and "Petrushka" (1911).

In Iraq, the literary and artistic productions are not completely fully-fledged, though they are prodigious in some respects. Artists and writers are always open-minded to new styles and ideas. Whatever material they need is available at local bookshops. However, there is no "public" interest in studying composition because the prerequisites, like music books, records and other composition requirements are not quite available.

Then there must be reasons for the widening gap between art and literary movements on the one hand and symphony composition on the other. In brief, they are:

1) The difficulty in studying music in general and musical composition in particular, (which is a key factor in musical evolution);

2) The non-availability of musical instruments that would guarantee the performance of modern composition;

3) The absence of an artistic/social tradition which affects the enthusiasm of composers at an early stage of their career; they are psychologically influenced, morally and materially, by social encouragement;

4) The shortage of a music printing and publishing house made it difficult to publish teaching material and musical compositions (notations);

5) The absence of musical competitions where musicians would be motivated to develop themselves.

What about musical composition?

The first sound man heard was the sound of nature, which had a great impact on him. He later on adopted the natural sounds along with some primitive hymns as a means of magic rites.

At a developed stage, when the early language syllables appeared, the primitive song and the inborn metric modes (rhythm) emerged. The song was developing with the passage of time and in particular when man invented the first percussionist instrument

Music flourished during the Islamic era especially during the Abbasid period when literary and music forum became common place. However, the Hulago invasion brought music to a standstill. But when the social and literary renaissance took place in the 19th century, music was not untouched — Maqam reading, wedding songs and traditional mawlid, a religious day celebrating Prophet Mohammed's Birthday. Since then, musical norms and traditions have remained far from being strictly governed by a scientific method, though the required elements were available. The cultural musical wealth we inherited from the early musicologists and the potential value of the various traditional musical forms includes Maqam, instantaneous musical performance, country music, folk music and bedouin music, in addition to the impact of the musical instruments we inherited throughout history, such as the Sumerian harp, on it. The instruments have developed in shape and function to meet local needs. Other instruments include the Qanoon and the Oud, whose sound production, function and manipulation have not yet been fully explored or experimented by our musicians.

The absence of a certain method in music made the pioneer musicians, during the thirties, turn to the European achievement in music to follow its terminology without thinking of establishing a purely Iraqi musical method.

Therefore "musical production" in Iraq is still below the standard (music for songs excluded), although there are some works of a high standard, however, these works do not form an artistic phenomenon in the general cultural production. It is a matter of fact that people all over the world develop their music by benefiting from the "classical method" known throughout the world. We, in the early forties, benefited indeed from it as far as musical perform-

ance is concerned. However, other main aspects remained inaccessible to musicians and music students. The local identity of any country was always present in their symphonic music. Therefore even if we followed or borrowed from the classical method we would be able to establish our own symphonic identity because our local traditional music is rich in spirit and form. This should not be understood as a call for imitating the European music. Rather we hope to achieve a new phase in musical composition. No one will be imitating anyone, as each composer will have his own musical pattern. Famous musicians have their own styles even though they are contemporaneous. For example Bach and Handel, both appeared in Germany during the Baroque period, the first followed a polyphonic style while the second had a harmonic style.

In Iraq, composers have no particular style and since there were no preliminary basics for them to follow, Iraqi composers are considered amateurs as their studies were based on their own personal efforts in Iraq and abroad. The artistic character of music composition does not practically exist in Iraq, despite the works done by Fereed-Alla Werdi in the late fifties and the casual productions achieved in the 1970s by Abdul Ameer Al-Sarraf, Mundher Jamal Hafidh, Abdul Razzaq Al-Azzawi, Khalil Ismail and Beatrice Ohannessian in the seventies.

This backwardness is partly attributed to the lack of a comprehensive method for teaching music. Even in the late thirties when the Fine Arts Institute was opened, the Music Department had no method of its own. So if teaching principles of general music lacked a special method, then how could we expect the field of composing to develop or a new generation of composers to appear? Composing indeed requires special academic studies in sound and form. Therefore there is not much difference between music of the fifties and today's.

Musical programming has been absent throughout Iraqi composers, apart from Fereed-Alla Werdi and Abdul Ameer Al-Sarraf, relied heavily on their own efforts in learning. Besides, the gradual disappearance of specialized studies and the casual composing has, with the passage of time, led to a feeling of futility

among composers, although every now and then some produced a musical piece of work depending on their mood. Therefore no change took place whether in quality or quantity.

Accordingly, the musician, whenever embarking on a new piece of work has to start from scratch. He has no fixed tradition and no social perspective to motivate him. This is how Fereed-Alla Werdi succeeded in the 1950s in establishing himself socially and in the world of composing. As it lacks the simplest form of a method, musical composition in Iraq reached nowhere. Iraqi composers are still floundering through their work. So how could a new modern

musical renaissance relying on our tradition be achieved if there is something gnawing through the structure of the traditional music itself?

The persistent backward musical situation has also led to a feeling of indifference toward anything related to music such as following up and developing music students' skills. The result was a constant decline in the standard of music students.

If no solution is found then the enthusiasm with which the Fine Arts Institute, the Music and Ballet School and the Iraqi Institute for Musical Studies were established, will certainly fade away. Without the introduction of a special method for each music institute very little will be achieved to raise the present standard and the creation of a new generation capable of establishing a true musical movement will remain far away.

Specialized music subjects like history, notation, performance, harmony, acoustics, musical taste and others should be taught at our musical institutions. Only twenty-five years ago, these subjects were taught at the Fine Arts Institute. Now some of these subjects are no longer included in the teaching programme or, even if they do, they are short of being practical. The Music Section at the Music and Ballet School has most of these subjects included in its curriculum (apart from composing) But emphasis was on the theoretical rather than the practical aspect of it. Thus the desire to continue and develop faded away. Therefore, the school was subjected to a state of non-discipline which made the "model" school no different from the Fine Arts Institute: a mere desire to achieve the best without making the best of the available means.

Our music schools are urgently requested to open

music labs which will be time saving and facilitate the teaching of music. The labs will also enable music students to make practical and theoretical field researches and realize the sound dimensions of each type of music whether traditional or modern, especially the sound dimensions of the Maqam music which requires accurate lab studies so that the dimensions would be fixed.

Iraqi composers are required to do what world musicians did: setting the principles of a genuine music which might later on portray local skills in using traditional folklore and style. Modern composers created their own means when they comprehended the "musical" which does not differ in style from that of Bach, Verdi, Dvorak, Kodaly, Bartok, Khachadurian, Amirov, Mahler and others. The only difference between the composers was that each of them had his own "approach" that stems from his own ability to deal with both sound and formation at one time. If we take Khachadurian for example we may notice that he did not abandon Bach's or Beethoven's or Brahms' methods. He rather followed them and was later able to go beyond that by introducing the spirit of his Armenian music with all its sound dimensions, metric modes and scales. By so doing he embodied his Armenian style through symphonic music. The only difference between him and those he followed was his approach. He was one of those composers and established a local identity.

In Iraq, the local identity was in fact achieved in art and literature. But this cannot be said about music unless all the technical elements are comprehended and students of music are provided or encouraged to develop the ability of producing and composing in order to go beyond the prerequisites for good and genuine composition.

Folklore Festival



Mr. Izzat Ibrahim, Vice-Chairman of the Revolution command Council and Mr. Latif Nsayyif Jassim, Minister of Information and Culture visiting the exhibits at the Folklore Festival Exhibition.

Vice-Chairman of the Revolution Command Council, Mr Izzat Ibrahim, opened on April 21 the 4th folk festival organised by the Ministry of Information and Culture to mark Baghdad Day celebrations.

The opening ceremony was attended by Minister of Information and Culture Mr Latif Nsayyif Jassim. Mr Ibrahim toured the pavilions of the participating Ministries, Provinces and Unions in Iraq and the Municipality of Baghdad.

During the Festival, Arab and Kurdish folk dances and songs were presented.

Among the participants in the Festival were the Ministries of Youth, Education, Local Government, the General Federation of Iraqi Women, the General Federation of Farmers Cooperative Societies, the General Secretariat of Information and Culture in the Autonomy Region, the National Union of Iraqi Students and Youth.

The Festival was attended by a number of officials, heads of the Arab and foreign diplomatic corps in Baghdad and a large number of visitors.

The Festival exhibited various handicrafts ranging from textile, rugs, carpets, copper, to woodworks, ceramics and pottery articles as well as folk costumes

and other typical Iraqi handicrafts.

The Folklore Department at the Ministry of Information and Culture prepared various documentary films which acquainted the viewers with Iraqi folklore and heritage. It has also brought to the fair several of the equipment in order to allow the visitors to watch the make of various handicrafts. A photo exhibition was also organised by the department.

The Folklore Department was founded in 1982 and was intended to cooperate with the Handicraft Centre in Iraq, especially in catering for the Arab folklore in general and the Iraqi folklore in particular. These two bodies are in charge of defining the nature and types of the Iraqi handicrafts and working on this revival and development. They are also concerned with the production of handicrafts and in making archives of all related subjects.

On various national occasions, the Department also organises exhibitions outside Iraq in implementation of bilateral cultural agreements. It also has a museum in Haifa Street known as the Folklore Museum which displays various unique folklore pieces.

Mosul Spring Festival



On the 7th of April the 19th Spring Festival started in Mosul. It included 35 procession and decorated vehicles as well as art galleries, folklore exhibitions, flower shows, race meetings and other artistic activities.

Among the cultural activities which dramatized Iraqi folklore were four musicals presented by the School Activity Department in Nineveh. The first musical "*Bedouin Festivities*" depicted the life of the Bedouins. The second, "*The Sword*" dealt with the steadfastness and sacrifice of the people of Mosul when 250 years ago — they defeated dictator Nadir

Shah and aborted his evil attempts on their city. The third "*The Sweetness of Victory*" was about customs and traditions of the people of Mosul in bygone days.

"*The Great Harvest*" was another musical inspired by the steadfastness of the people of Iraq against the invading Iranian aggressors.

Moreover, many art exhibitions were held including photography, calligraphy, caricature, and handicrafts such as carpentry ceramics, goldsmithing, metal beating and others which depicted the cultural development in Iraq.



Exhibitions

* Hafidh Al-Duroubi, founder of the Iraqi Expressionist Group in the early 1950s, held his sixth exhibition at Al-Riwaq Gallery from March 12 to 28, 1987.

On display were some 28 oil works of different sizes portraying landscapes and Baghdadi life style and people.

As adherent to expressionism, Al-Duroubi, probably deliberately, never detached himself from the same subjects he tackled in his previous exhibitions. He prefers bright colours especially blue and light green. The (orchard) and the (Three Palm Trees) show a beautiful combination of such colours. Meanwhile (Baghdadi Marketplace) is one of the four works reflecting Baghdadi life style and people.

"The Red House" and "Out Of A Window" demonstrate his ability in portraying the English weather especially by applying the suitable colours in a skilful manner.

In fact, Al-Duroubi shows more than skill in his art. He is realistic in his paintings though, at certain points, phantasy seems to merge.

* Omar Al-Hassan had 33 oil paintings on display in his fourth exhibition at the National Museum last March. The dominant theme was of political and social nature depicted in various styles.



* The First National Art Exhibition for Amateurs was opened last month at Al-Nakkash Gallery. Young artists from all over the country took part in this artistic demonstration with some 150 works on display. Most of the exhibits were shown for the first time.

* Artist Hana Malullah had 22 works on display at Al-Riwaq Gallery last February. Asked why she had all her works on exhibition, Malullah said she feared her works might be misunderstood. "I intended to introduce my previous sketches to the public so that they are recognized and, probably, assessed by the public as one collection," she thought.

"Lovers and The Waves" "Pain" "The Head" "Remains In A Cage" and other works show Malullah's ability to express herself through these sketches which could be looked upon as a reflection of the never-ending dialogue between the artist and his themes. Her style is detached and conveys various aspects of imagination and accuracy.

* "Objective Cases" was the theme of Shakir Hassan Al-Sa'id's exhibition held at Baghdad Gallery last April. Explaining the theme of his exhibition which included 26 oil and collage works, Al-Sa'id said



Two paintings by Shakir Hassan Al-Sa'ed from his recent one-man exhibition.



Two exhibits from the Fourteenth Party Exhibition of Arts.

he had a feeling of being deracinated because, at one point, "I denounce my subjectivity to see the world with the eyes of the public, and produce my art.

Hence realizing my non-subjectivity" He believes that by denouncing egoism, the artist can achieve a state where he could go beyond anything else to reach humanity.

* The Fourteenth Party Exhibition of Arts was

organised at Saddam Arts Centre on the anniversary of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, April 7. The exhibition was intended to perpetuate the pan-Arab identity of art in the Arab world.

The large participation by painters, sculptors, and ceramic artists demonstrates the significance of holding such an exhibition to establish new artistic trends among young artists. This could bring a clear cut definition of modern Arab art as opposed to the existing artistic schools and trends.



The exhibition was a good opportunity for young artists to exchange views and ideas through their works and benefit from the works and experiences of prominent Iraqi artists some of whose works were also on display.

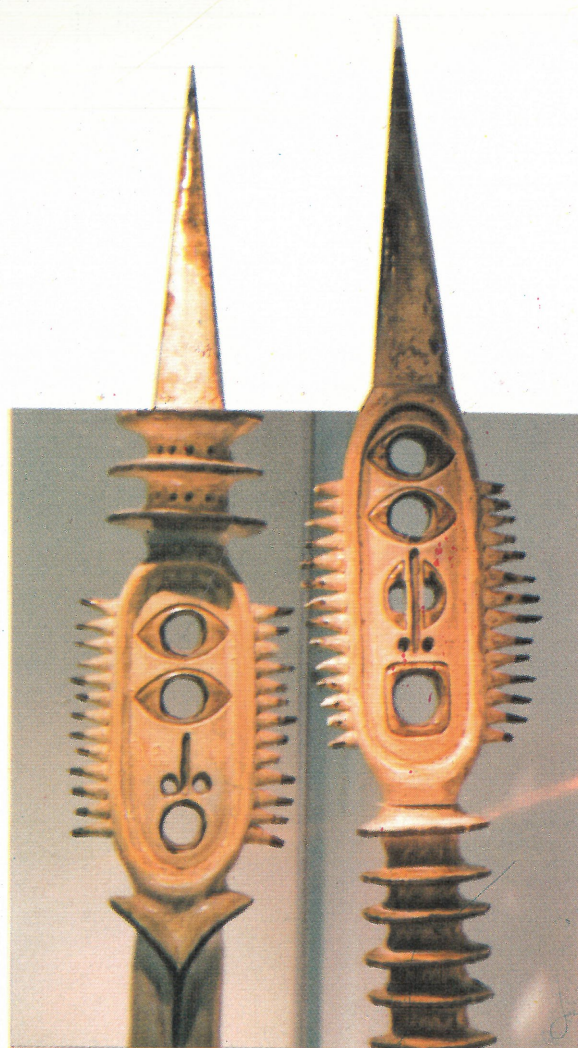
*Iraqi Artists Win Medals

--At the Second International Biennial Cairo Festival, three Iraqi artists won the Bronze Medal. The works of Mukhallad Al-Mukhtar, Salim Al-Dabbagh and Khudhayir Al-Shakarji were assessed and praised by the Egyptian Critics Commission. In their ruling, members of the jury appreciated the efforts made by the Iraqi artists and their contribution

to the Arab and world art movement despite war conditions.

The International Art Association (IAA) decorated the Iraqi artist Faiq Hassan with the IAA medal and selected him its Honorary President for life in recognition of his services to the world art movement in general and to his own country's in particular.

The Iraqi Minister of Information and Culture, Mr. Latif Nssaif Jassim presented the IAA medal to Mr. Hassan during the 25th Annual Exhibition of the Iraqi Artists Society. Mr. Hassan is the first Iraqi artist to be awarded this medal which was designed by the Polish Artists Society.



Theatre



A scene from play called "The Symphony of the Sparrows."

* *Love, Bread and Onion* written and directed by Adil Kadhim, was on show at the National Theatre, Baghdad. It is about a playwright trying to write a play. It shows his pains, joys and a feeling of discontent. At certain points Kadhim seems to have overdone things a little especially in blowing up his characters' emotions.

* *Horace*, by Pierre Corneille, was performed by the National Theatre Group at Al-Rashid Theatre in conjunction with the World Theatre Day celebrations.

Directed by Badri Hassoun Farid, *Horace* concentrates on the sacrifice made for the defence and protection of the homeland. Besides the main actors, a number of Fine Arts Academy undergraduates took part in the three-and-a-half-hour performance.

Director Farid was more than successful in bringing the play to present time spirit without causing any loss of the values and concepts this 17th century play conveys.

* *Profit And Love* presents a sharp disagreement between members of a family towards a crime committed by a close relative of theirs. Written and directed

by Qassim Muhammad, the play shows two divergent views about a legal practice — being in love — and an illegal conduct — dishonest profit making.

The play, in fact, tries to tackle a rather complicated social issue where family reaction determines the destiny of the main characters in it.

* *Sharia* written by Yousif Al-Ani and directed by Dr. Fadhil Khalil exposes a small Baghdadi community living on boat hiring. A drastic change takes place among them when a public transport bus service starts to operate in their neighbourhood.

Appalled and discontented by the sudden appearance of the bus and being unwilling to give in and cope with the modern aspects of life, these people react differently — some accept the change and adapt themselves to it. Others oppose it and try to stop it.

* *Screaming Of Dumb Silence* is an abstract play whose melodramatic construction depends primarily on anachronisms. It relies in performance on the two elements of any ordinary dramatic work, — the audience and the actor. Written by Muhyiddin Zengana and directed by Dr. Awni Karraoomi, the play is con-



"Screaming of Dumb Silence" is considered by many critics as a new trend in the Iraqi stage movement.

sidered by many critics as a new trend in the Iraqi stage movement because it represents no names, no dates nor any location. However, the spectator can very easily take the movements or words of the actors as his own or reflecting his own environment.

* *Colourful Butterflies* and *Friends* were on view at the 60-Seat Theatre in Baghdad last March. Written by Jalil Al-Qaisi and directed by Fakhri Al-Aqidi, *Colourful Butterflies* is a romantic exposition of human values. It is a story of a husband and wife looking back to their wedding day and honeymoon when they were young, lively and joyful.

Friends of Robert Varjun, Iraqized and also directed by Al-Aqidi focuses on the hypocrats who capitalize on others' misfortune. The events follow interestingly and the characters are never short of artistic skill.

* *Hamlet* in Mosul and Baghdad

The London Shakespeare Company presented *Hamlet* at the Saddam Theatre at Mosul University last March. The same group also performed in Baghdad for three days. This is the second time they visit

Iraq on an artistic mission. Last year they performed *Twelfth Night* whose tickets were sold out weeks in advance.

* *Whipping Boy* is a comedy written by Falah Abdul-Latif and directed by Sami Qaftan. It tries to expose instances of social misconduct and misdemeanours in a sarcastic way. But, to many, Mr. Qaftan seems to have struggled a great deal to present the theme as a comedy. However, the characters are shaky and, instead of being comedians, they helplessly try to make the spectators laugh.

Birthday shows a relationship between the son of a peasant and a royal family whose daughter becomes the son's wife. Written by the Italian playwright Eduardo Filippo and Iraqized and directed by Fathi Zein Al-Abidin, the play exposes unemployment as the cause of social embarrassment and family disintegration.

* *Arsonists* by Max Fresh was on view at the Fine Arts Theatre. It shows two ordinary people starting fires about their town to satisfy a hidden desire. The director, Shafiq Al-Mahdi was successful in presenting the characters and in using the burning fire as the

fatal end of the arsonists.

* *Mother* adapted by Jalal Jamil from Czechoslovak playwright Karel Capek was on show in Mosul beginning April 1. The play shows the role of mother in promoting patriotism in her family. The main character — the mother — loses her father in the Arab-Zionist war in 1948, her husband in the 1967 war, and her two sons in defending Syrian territory in 1973. She urges her last son to take up arms and fight the Iranian aggressors, thus invoking his ancestors' glorious history.

Mr. Jamil was pretty artful in manipulating lighting to introduce special effects.

* A Kurdish Theatre Festival was organised in the northern provincial city of Suleimaniya March 28-31 to celebrate the World Theatre Day anniversary.

In *The High Seas*, *Nali In A Purple Dream*, *Romeo And Juliet*, *Love Lyric* and others were performed at the Fine Arts Institute.

In conjunction with the Festival, a seminar was held where the papers presented tackled inter alia war

in Brecht's theatre, experimental theatre, make-up in the Kurdish Theatre, and sex and theatre.

* The Ministry of Information and Culture licensed a new Kurdish performing group — The Modern Kurdish Theatre Group.

In its programme of work for 1987, the Group intends to perform two plays, five radio and television series in addition to organising two social functions for the artists in the Kurdistan area.

*The Iraqi National Committee, in charge of collecting information on the history of the Iraqi theatre movement continues its work for the preparation of a report on the development of the Iraqi theatre during the last one hundred years.

The committee was formed in response to a request by the Paris-based World Commission of Modern Theatre Encyclopaedia.

*The Cinema and Theatre Authority organised the Fourth Experimental Theatre Festival, April 11-22. The festival's activities included seven plays and four lectures on the development of experimental theatre.



"Screaming of Dumb Silence" was directed by Dr. Awni Karroomi.

Film Production

In cooperation with UNESCO, Baghdad Municipality has recently produced "The Song of Times" a new documentary on Baghdad. The film shows the cultural and economic developments that have been taking place in Baghdad under the July 17, 1968 Revolution. It also reflects the significant projects that were carried out during the past years of war.

The 20-minute long film was shown during the Film Festival held at the Fine Arts Academy on April 24.

"The Cavalier and the Mountain" a new Iraqi feature film, is being shot in Baghdad Province and in addition to some rural sites of other provinces.

The film is based on a story written by Abdul-Khaliq al-Rikabi, a well-known young Iraqi story writer.

Mohammed Shukri Jamil, the director of the film is assisted by Mohammed Abu al-Fateh, Qais Hamidi and Khalid Aziz in shooting the film. A great number of actors and actresses take part in the film.

The film touches upon a certain critical phase in the modern history of Iraqi people and covers the late 1950s up to the beginning of the 1970s.

It also highlights the tremendous changes experienced by the Iraqis; there is dramatic treatment of various strata in Iraqi society.

Yousif al-Ani, Khalil Shawqi, Sami Abdul-Hameed, Fatima al-Rube'i, Sa'diya al-Zeidi, Tu'ma al-Timimi, Ghazi al-Tikriti and Fadhil Khalil are the prominent stars among the cast.



"The Cavalier and the Mountain," a new Iraqi feature film.

Intellectual Symposium

Under the auspices of Mr. Latif Nsayyif Jassim, Minister of Information and Culture, the Third Intellectual Symposium was held at the Ministry by Afaq Arabiya journal (March 7-9, 1987). "Means of Confronting the Strategy Intended to Dismember the Arab World" was the theme of the symposium.

The symposium indicated that the Iranian aggression against Iraq is proceeding from anti-Arab strategies set forth during the last two decades by forces hostile to the Arab nation.

The symposium held five sessions, the first of which included the following research papers:

- * A Historical Approach to the International Theories concerning the Arab Region, by Dr. Abdul Ridha Al-Ta'an.

- * "The American Strategy Variables in the 1980s" by Dr. Hassan Al-Bazzaz.

- * "The European Attitude and the Arab Revolution" by Dr. Basil Al-Bustani.

- * "Sectarianism and its role in the Scheme of Dismemberment of the Arab World" by Mr. Muhsin Khalil.

The second session included four research papers:

- * The Impact of Orientalism on National Security Theories in Relation to the Arab Region" by Dr. Muhsin Al-Musawi.

- * "The Strategy of American Interests in the Arab World" by Dr. Kadhim Hashim Al-Na'ama.

- * "Zionist Militarism in the 1990s" by Major-General Mohammed Al-Nakshabandi.

- * "The Necessity of Coherence of Arab National Institutions by Dr. Sa'di Sa'di.

In the third session, the following five research papers were submitted:

- * "Strategy of Arab National Security" by Dr. Abdul Muna'im Abdul Wahhab.

- * "Camp David and the Dangers of Isolating Egypt from Arab National Security" by Dr. Hamid Rubai'a.

- * "Zionist Strategy in the Light of the Threats to Iraq" by Dr. Mazin Al-Ramadhni.

- * "The Military Strategy in Saddam's Qadissiya in the Light of the Threatening Situation" by Brigadier Amjad Hassan Al-Zihairi.

- * "The Scheme of Dismemberment of the Arab World in the Light of Kissenger-Brzezinski Theory" by Dr. Walid Al-A'dhami.

The fourth session included four research papers:

- * "Ba'th's Experience in Confronting Projects of Dismemberment" by Mr. Sabah Yassin.

- * "The Zionist Conception of Sectarian and Ethnic Dismemberment" by Major-General Mahmood Sheet Khattab.

- * "The National Charter: Its Importance in the light of the Threatening Situation"

The fifth session included two research papers:

- * "The National Option in Confronting the Scheme of Dismemberment" by Dr. Elias Farah.

- * Lessons of Confronting Aggression:

- a) "Military Lesson" by Major-General Mahmood Wahib.

- b) "Information and Cultural Lesson" by Dr. Majid Ahmed al-Samarraei.

- c) "Economic Lesson" by Dr. Isam Huwaish.

- d) "Geographical Lesson" by Dr. Sabri Al-Hiti.

- e) "Social Lesson" by Dr. Ma'an Khalil Al-Omar.

The research papers showed that the hostile scheme being carried out now against the Arab region were primarily based on the opinions of travellers and orientalists, common at the end of the 19th century.

Those orientalists imagined that the Arab region could be dismembered and divided. The Kissenger-Brzezinski theories which are compatible with these opinions concluded that the Third World including the Arab region is still at the pre-Newtonian stage, implying that the East lacks in accuracy. This perspective was blessed by Kissenger who built his plan on this background.

The second focal point (confrontation of challenges) stressed that the Arab national trend during the last four decades has been the target of theories and schemes hostile to the Arab nation. This point was particularly covered by Dr. Elias Farah and Mr.

Muhsin Khalil who both emphasized that the confrontation of sectarianism, whether it is a backward regional phenomenon or a weapon in the hands of the imperialist and Zionist forces, calls for intensification of struggle in accordance with the Arab national ideology which stands up to all divisive tendencies including the tribal and ethnic ones is capable of des-

troying the sectarian trend. This calls for a total alertness by the Arab revolution movement and its national tide. These researches also covered the Ba'th's experience in confronting the divisive plans, referring to the Party's struggle in this field since its founding.

In his research paper, Dr. Abdúl Muna'm Abdul Wahhab, pointed out the basic elements through which the Arab nation can confront all the threats and dangers facing it. He stressed the importance of the National Charter announced by President Saddam Hussein, which is seen as the most serious Arab document to regulate the relation between the Arab countries and confront the sworn and potential enemies of them.

The third and last focal point included lessons to confront aggression and ways of employing them to crystallize a counter-Arab strategy.

The symposium reached the following conclusions and recommendations:

The Iranian aggression against Iraq is a major link to the Zionist-imperialist schemes intended to undermine the contemporary revival of the Arab nation and to stop the development in Iraq. The participants in the symposium are further convinced that Iran's rulers have become an instrument in the hand of the Zionist entity through their persistence in war and their rejection of all peace calls presented by Iraq and the Arab and Islamic regional and international organisations and through the exposition of the arms deals between the Zionist entity and Iran.

The symposium also stressed that the creation and encouragement of the divisive and dubious movements and trends in the Arab world are an integral part of an old-new Zionist design which is incompatible with the Iranian approach of aggression against Iraq and the Arab nation.

The symposium underlined that the pressing need for maintaining the Arab nation's structure demands profound consciousness of the dangers of this design and confrontation of its applied formulas represented in the Iranian aggression against Iraq, in what is going on in Lebanon against the Palestinian issue and in other parts of the Arab world. This necessitates the adoption of various means to contain this design and thwart it.

The symposium also affirmed that the Arab people, when they take their matters in hand, are able to confront the most serious challenges and threats. This was further stressed by the Iraqi people's experience in zealously defending their land against the Iranian aggression, an experience which has changed the concept of the conventional military strategic depth to cover the Iraqi people as a whole.

The symposium also underlined the prominent and

decisive position of the historic leadership at times of critical junctures. It indicated that the judicious and courageous leaderships are indispensable to enable the nation to overcome the threats against it, proceeding from the great role played by the leadership of President Saddam Hussein on various levels.

Proceeding from Iraq's experience in confronting the Iranian aggression aimed at occupying Iraqi territory, the symposium held that the use of judicious planning, adoption of national logic and fulfillment of the requirements of various eventualities is the ideal method to stand up to the challenges of the age.

The participants in the symposium saw that a new stage has been initiated in the Arab life in the light of Iraq's unwavering steadfastness against aggression and in the light of Iraq's view of the Arab nation's steadfastness represented in it.

The participants also indicated that the genuine national option for vital Arab solidarity provides for the solution and that any departure from it is a departure from the Arab nation's will. Hence, they emphasized that Arab solidarity should be maintained.

The symposium held that the methods used to study the cultural, political and historical production related to the situation in the Arab region should be seriously reviewed and scrutinized and there should be a distinction between scientific motives and political purposes behind it.

Proceeding from the fact of the association of the expansionist Iranian objectives with the Zionist and imperialist ones, the participants stressed the importance of adopting President Saddam Hussein's National Charter as being the most serious contemporary Arab document to regulate the Arab relations. They emphasized the need for an Arab strategy based on the principles of the National Charter to confront the hostile designs intended to dismember the Arab world.

The participants indicated that the Arab nation can be a combat nation of unique type when a historic and firm leadership is available to lead it and when the elements and requirements of fighting are met. They stressed that Iraq's steadfastness and that of the Arab revolution forces in the Palestinian camps and in the occupied territories mark a new stage of national revival. The Iraqis' steadfastness on the battlefield over more than six years has opened a new ground for all the Arabs.

At the same time, the symposium called for studying the historical experience of the Arab nation in a way that would avoid all the things arousing dissension between the Arab people or impairing their confidence in their history.

Finally, the participants indicated the necessity of following the developments of the anti-Arab design and ensuring ways of confronting it with various means.

Seminars

* In conjunction with the national drive to study the historical, architectural, military, literary and archaeological aspects of Iraqi towns, the Union of Arab Historians organised several seminars for this purpose in various historical sites and towns.

A successful gathering was held in the city of Samarra which occupies a significant position in the Arab and Islamic history.

Several research papers presented at the meeting focussed on the impact and influence of Baghdad on the planning of Samarra, architecture of Samarra, pre-Islamic literature of Samarra and on the city's military position throughout its history.

A similar seminar was held in Wasit to trace back in depth the position and influence of Wasit on ancient Iraq.

* The Iraqi Photography Society held a meeting last February to discuss the possibility of participating in the International Photo Exhibition (INTERPRESS PHOTO) scheduled in Baghdad later this year.

The Society's chairman, Sami al-Nasrawi expressed his appreciation of the International Journalists Union for organising the exhibition in Baghdad. He said the initiative demonstrated the IJU's solidarity with the Iraqi people who fight aggression to establish peace.

* A folklore festival was organised at the Baghdad International Fair last April. Several ministries, orga-

nisations and associations took part in the week-long exhibition-like gala. On display were woven rugs, woodwork, copper, potteries, ceramics and other handicraft exhibits.

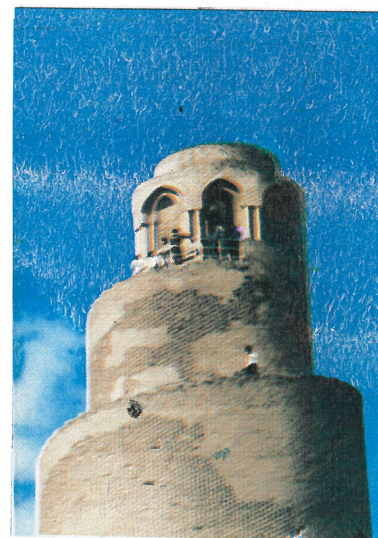
* The Iraqi Translators Association organised its first "Cultural Season" at the Mustansiriya University Hall. Several outstanding Iraqi translators and academics lectured on the importance of translation in conveying especially literary works to the Iraqi readers.

* The Radio and TV Authority recorded and videotaped new T.V. and radio programmes devoted to Ramadhan (month of fasting). Arab feature films and series were shown on television on this occasion.

* The Iraqi Writers Union organised a series of lectures and poetry reciting evenings where Iraqi and non-Iraqi men-of-letters spoke on various literary themes. Dr. Luz Garcia Constantin of Spain talked about the development of Spanish poetry and the modern trends influencing it.

Dr. Muhsin Al-Musawi and others talked about orientalism as a movement and its impact on the transfer of Arab literary works to the rest of the world.

Other speakers tackled various issues like modernity in Iraqi poetry, story writing in the twentieth century in Iraq and the development of the Iraqi theatre since the 1960s.



THE GRAND ORIENT BOOK FAIR

Under the patronage of Minister of Information and Culture, Mr Latif Nsayyif Jassim, the Grand Orient Book Fair was held in Baghdad (March 15-April 1, 1987). It was the fifth international book fair organised by the National House for Distribution and Advertising.

On display were more than 30,000 titles on a variety of subjects like science, politics, literature, technology, education and others. Prior to the book fair, a questionnaire was carried out to find out the general fields of interest among Iraqi readers. Results showed that scientific topics were almost the most favourite among the readers.

More than 500 Iraqi, Arab and foreign publishing houses took part in the fair. Among them were Longman, McGraw-Hill, and the London-based Third World Centre.

Several Iraqi and international scientific and cultural organisations took part in the 2-week long book fair. The Baghdad-based UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) had its special section in the fair. Dozens of its publications on display included dictionaries, research papers, books

and studies on various economic and social issues of Western Asian countries.

The book fair, the largest in the region, was received with overwhelming acclaim. More than 40,000 people visited the fair daily. Special discount was given on books for sale.

Meanwhile lectures were given by well-known Iraqi writers, poets and intellectuals. In open debate, they were face to face with their readers reviewing and discussing their literary works through their own experiences and perception.

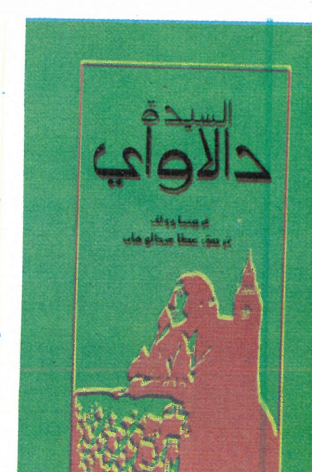
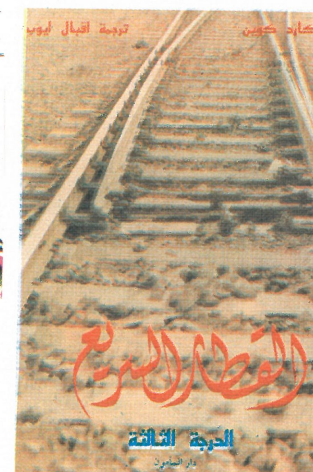
During the fair, publishers and distributors discussed in lengthy sessions plagiarism and obstacles facing distribution. Accordingly, a statement was issued calling on Arab governments to conclude agreements securing copyrights and curbing plagiarism.

At the end of the fair, certificates of merit were awarded to several publishers, writers and poets in appreciation of their distinguished publications in politics, science, history, children's culture, literature, arts and translation.

Dar Al-Ma'mun for Translation and Publishing was among the distinguished publishing houses during the fair.



NEW BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS



The two major Iraqi publishing houses, Dar al-Ma'mun for Translation and Publishing and the Cultural Affairs Department at the Ministry of Information and Culture have remarkably contributed to the boom of Iraqi publishing industry.

Among its latest books, Dar al-Ma'mun for Translation and Publishing has recently issued two valuable literary books translated into Arabic: "Shakespeare and the Solitary Man" written by Janette Dillon, translated by Jabra I. Jabra and "Modernism" edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, translated by Mu'ayyad Hassan Fawzi.

Mr. Jabra I. Jabra, writes a thoughtful introduction to his translation of Janette Dillon's "Shakespeare and the Solitary Man". He says that many essays and articles have been published on Shakespeare's dramatic works while everyday, various writings come out with new opinions of Shakespeare's genius. "They shed light on a novel aspect concerning the language, the image, or the symbol in view of the character or the dramatic structure," elaborates the translator.

The second book "Modernism" appeared a few weeks ago among the new titles of Dar al-Ma'mun's publications. It deals with an important topic related

to the emergence of modernism as a literary trend, its advocates and the social factors that paved the way for its emergence.

The books recently published by the Cultural Affairs Department may be put under the following headings: research works, fiction, poetry, little encyclopaedia series and other translated books.

In regard to the research works, some of the latest publications include the following:

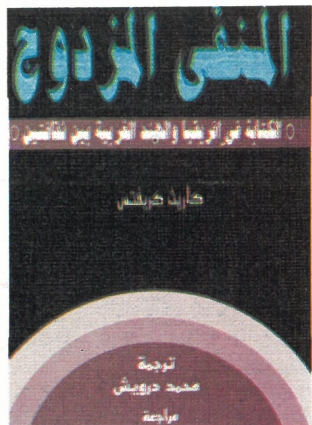
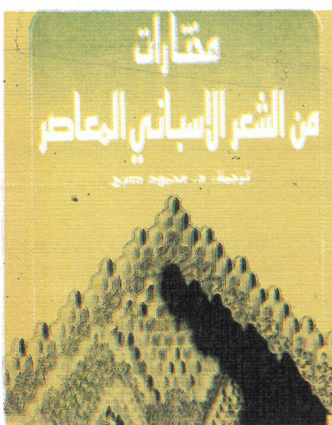
"The Constituents of Arab Culture" by Dr. Izzidin Ismail, includes a number of essays on the branches and the basis of the Arab culture in the pre-Islamic era. The author tackles particularly the art of poetry and various genres of prose such as story, autobiography, history and education in general.

"The History of Baghdad" by Dr. Badri M. Fahad contains 184 pages is originally a biographical study of Ibn al-Najar al-Baghdadi - an old Iraqi historian. It is regarded a reliable reference in this field.

In biography, Mr Naji al-Hadithi, Editor-in-Chief of Gilgamesh, the quarterly journal of modern Iraqi arts, has recently translated "Aspects of Biography" by Andre Maurois. The book is a collection of lectures delivered by Maurois in Trinity College in 1928. Maurois has followed in his book the example of the famous English writer E.M. Forster who had deli-



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vered a number of lectures on the aspects of novel writing craft.

Collections of poems and stories have also a considerable part in the number of books published. Within the series of (Culture and War) a new volume of poems, edited and introduced by the two Iraqi critics Basim A. Hamoudi and Tarrad al-Kubeisi has come out. The poems are mostly expressive and written in both traditional and modern styles.

Also the poems written by 48 Iraqi and Arab poets are governed by the dialect of love, war and life-death. Hence they are given a human touch.

As for short stories, a new collection of twelve stories has been recently published. "Basma" the story which bears the collection's title is written by the Kurdish writer Abdulla Aziz Khalid and translated into Arabic by Hasan al-Jaff:

The translation of these stories aims at making the Arab readers familiar with the modern Kurdish short stories in particular and other genres of Kurdish literature in general.

Another volume of stories, entitled "The Language of Psalms" was written by Yousif al-Haidari and published by the Cultural Affairs House. It contains twelve short stories distinguished by their style and the nature of the subjects dealt with.

As for critical essays, Dr. Ali Shalash's book on African poems, mainly written in French, English and Spanish has recently been published.

The Little Encyclopaedia Series has published two interesting books, the first one is scientific and discusses the various sources and usages of energy. It includes texts on the new ways of storage and transfer of energy. Dr. Musa al-Janabi, the author of this useful book introduces his book saying: "Man has learned, during the last two centuries, how to change the chemical energy extracted from coal, oil and natural gas

into mechanical force, and how to use the electric power in various domestic purposes and other fields."

The second book in this Series introduces the reader to another field of foreign culture. "Selections from Modern Soviet Poetry" is the title of Ali Al-Hilli's book. The author is a well-known Iraqi poet, therefore he has succeeded in his comments on the selected poems and the beautiful presentation of the old and young Soviet poets' creative writings.

Moreover, other Iraqi state and private publishing sectors, as part of their cultural contributions, have published numerous books on various subjects such as travel, horizons of technology, drama, collections of short stories and poems, essays on political systems in the Third World and other papers dealing with some famous Arab historians during different Islamic eras.

Children's Culture House on the other hand, has continued to publish new books and translations directed to children of all ages. Among the prominent titles produced during the past three months are a translation of an abridged version of Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckle Berry Finn, the Tales of Grim Brothers and many others.

Children's Culture House has ventured for the first time into the realm of encyclopaedias. An ambitious plan has been undertaken whereby a large number of encyclopaedias dealing with subjects of interest to or concerning children will be published continuously. The first of such encyclopaedias which deals with the military topics has come out recently and is about flight and aviation. Other parts of this series which is known as the Little Golden Encyclopaedia will follow later this year. The important thing about these encyclopaedias is that for the first time at the Arab world level they are prepared, edited and designed entirely by Iraqi staff.



3 - 1987

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A Journal of Modern Iraqi Arts

